

THE SWINEHERD PAINTER.

ONE autumn day, about two or three and thirty years ago, a travelling carriage was slowly ascending a steep and sandy hill on the high road, about ten miles from Antwerp. It was one of those days of alternate cloud and sunshine, when the landscape shows to the greatest advantage; great shadows of clouds driven by the fresh, pleasant west wind, rested here and there upon woods and valleys, making their shades deeper, while capricious gleams of light gilded upland fields, from whence the corn was not yet carried, or played on the foam of the water-wheel, and brought out in full relief the peaked red gables of the miller's house, backed by fruit-trees heavily laden.

The owner of the carriage seemed to enjoy this beautiful scene and weather, for he alighted from his carriage at the foot of the hill; and slowly as the horses climbed up its sandy ascent, his progress was still slower, for he turned round every three yards to note the different changes in the scene as the driving clouds cast fresh shadows, or the objects of the landscape assumed fresh combinations as he advanced; so that the carriage was almost out of sight by the time he came up to a boy, who, leaning against a rail, was drawing figures in the sand with so much attention and interest, that he did not perceive the stranger's approach.

"What are you doing, my little man?" said the gentleman.

The boy looked up, and without answering, ran to him and tried to pull him backwards by the tails of his coat. "Oh, you are walking over St. Peter," he cried, in such a tone of tragic despair, that the gentleman laughed and retreated a few steps.

"What do you mean?"

"Why my beautiful head that I have been all the morning drawing," said the boy, endeavouring to efface the footmarks in the loose sand which covered the spot where they stood; "it was so exactly like!"

"Like what?"



"The image of St. Peter in the church. I have done it a great many times, but never got it so like before, and I meant to have drawn the whole figure, with the keys and all, but the sand is so trampled now, I shall not be able to do it. I had just left it for a moment, to draw that carriage that passed just now; the postilion had such a comical face, and the valet, perched up behind, looked so hungry and cross, and never once turned round to look at the view, though there is nothing half so pretty between this and Antwerp."

While he spoke the stranger was examining a drawing traced on the sand with the point of a stick, of his own carriage and servants, and although, from the nature of the implements used, roughly done, yet a spirited likeness of the somewhat remarkable features of the men had been produced, while the attitude of the horses labouring to draw the heavy vehicle up the hill, was very well done. He made no observation, however, but simply asked the child if he had ever been at Antwerp.

"Yes, once." Then folding his hands with an expression of reverential admiration, he added, "And in the great church there I saw Rubens's pictures!"

"Ah, indeed; and what did you think of them?"

"Oh, sir, if I could only see them always, I should be happy. I dream of them almost every night, and I try to draw bits of them on the sand, but I can do so little," he went on, with a sigh.

"Would you not like to have pencil and paper to draw with?" said the gentleman.

"Oh, yes," said the child. "I have them on Sunday. The good curé gave me some, and after mass I draw all day long. I am so happy then, without any pigs to look after."

"It seems to me that you have that pleasure now," said the other, "for I see none anywhere."

"Those stupid, tiresome beasts, they are always running away;" and, brandishing his stick, he rushed into the little grove near, and was soon heard shouting, gesticulating, screaming to his pigs; but it was some time before he could bring them all back; and in the meanwhile the stranger stood examining the scratches in the sand.

We may as well mention here who this gentleman was who took so much interest in the little swineherd's sketches, and inform our readers that he was a prince of one of the noblest families in Poland. More fortunate than the greater part of his countrymen, the father of Prince Ponasky had sold his great estates in Poland before its dismemberment by its powerful neighbours, and had settled in France, in whose rich and luxurious capital he could freely indulge his taste for the refined and beautiful. His son had grown up a perfect enthusiast of Art—one of those men one finds often in the higher circles, who, without any positive genius for the art they devote themselves to, have yet the greatest passion for everything connected with it. There are some patrons of art who take a kindly interest in those who minister to their pleasures; and one of the noblest of these was Prince Ponasky; his purse, his time, his sympathy, were ever at the service of the struggling artist; to have genius was a sure passport to his favour; and many, now famous, bless the kind hand that helped, and the wise head that counselled their inexperienced youth.

When the boy returned hot and breathless from his chase, the Prince was still contemplating the sand drawings.

"My friend," he said, "there is a great fault here. You have made the off-wheel about three times larger than the near one."

"Yes," said the boy, "that puzzles me. All my drawings of carts and carriages look wrong, and I cannot tell why. Both the wheels are really the same size, and yet if I make both the same length, one looks larger than the other."

"I will tell you," said the Prince. And taking the stick from the child's hand, he explained to him some of the first principles of perspective. The quick, intelligent eyes of his auditor followed eagerly every word and movement, and at the conclusion he clapped his hands with joy, and exclaiming, "I see now how to draw the wheels," he moved to an untrodden bit of sand, and drew the carriage with the most perfect correctness.

The Prince was delighted with his quick comprehension, and asked the boy to show him some of his Sunday sketches on paper.

"Well," he replied, "I have not got any here, but if you will come to-morrow I shall be here. This is the best bit of ground for drawing on for three miles round, and the view is so beautiful down there."

"But, my little friend, to-morrow I shall be many leagues from here, on my road to Paris."

"Then if you will stay here and take care of the pigs, I will go and fetch them for you."

"Thank you," replied the other, drily; "I think the best plan would be for you to tell me where your mother lives, and then I could go and look at your drawings there. I don't exactly see where the pigs are at this moment."

"Oh!" said the little swineherd, with a gesture of despair, "I never can draw for two minutes together in peace. I must go after them again."

"Tell me your mother's name first."

"Kaysar, sir—la Mère Kaysar. She lives in the first cottage after the church. You see the tower there above the trees."

"And your name is—"

"Heinrich; I am the youngest but two, and there are ten of us altogether."

"Well, adieu my little friend, perhaps we may meet again soon—don't forget what I have taught you."

"O! there is no danger of that, sir. I shall practise it as soon as ever those horrible pigs give me a moment's rest."

Prince Ponasky pursued his way to the top of the hill, where his carriage was waiting for him. He got in, and told the postilion to leave the high-road, proceed to the little village on the left, and stop at the cottage next the church.

The valet had been duly explaining to the postilion whilst they waited, that his master was an eccentric foreigner, crazed on the subject of artists and paintings. So the Prince was obeyed without more astonishment than was conveyed by an expressive shrug of the postilion's shoulders to the valet, and replied to by him with a significant shake of the head.

At the door of la Mère Kaysar the carriage stopped and the Prince entered. The good woman, who was washing, was filled with astonishment and terror at seeing so grand an equipage stop at her door. She thought some misfortune must have happened, and immediately began to think of her sons. Her relief was great when she found that this fine gentleman had only come to look at Heinrich's useless scraps of paper.

"You shall see them, and welcome, sir," she said; "I wish you could persuade Heinrich to turn his hand to something useful—no one will employ him for anything but pig-keeping, and even for that his master begins to say he is too lazy."

The Prince smiled to himself as he thought of the uncontrolled liberty the pigs seemed to enjoy under Heinrich's care—but said nothing, and began to examine the drawings. They were sketches of every imaginable object that came under his notice: his mother, brothers, and sisters were represented in all kinds of attitudes; the old water-mill; the picturesque church porch, with groups passing in to hear mass; his companions; his dog; even his special tormentors, the pigs, had their place in this gallery of art, where the backs of the drawings had other sketches upon them—paper being far too valuable a commodity to serve only once. There were, of course, innumerable faults; but with them all a breadth and freedom, a quickness in catching likenesses, and power of giving its distinctive character to everything he attempted, that to the Prince's experienced eye evinced a very

high degree of talent. Even genius—who knew?—might be lurking there! What should he do? Should he leave this embryo artist to sink down into the sordid life of the boors around him, or should he take him with him and give him the training his powers seemed to demand? He pondered long and profoundly, at length he said:—

"I think your son has a decided talent, my good woman. Should you like him to be brought up as an artist?"

"Ah, sir, that is what a painting gentleman who came out from Antwerp in the spring said; but we are too poor to think of that. Heinrich must get his living as he can. Here are some of the drawings the gentleman showed him how to do, all in colours, much prettier than those black scratches, but he has no paints now."

The Prince turned over the water-colour drawings the good mother reached down from the shelf where they lay between a jar of onions and a round cheese, and decided at once what he would do. Heinrich should accompany him immediately to Paris, and he would take the care of his future destiny upon himself. In a few words he explained his plan to la Mère Kaysar, who wept, half with joy that her son should have such advantages offered to him, half with grief at the idea of parting with him. But she refused to decide either way, till Heinrich himself had been spoken to on the subject—for he had good sense enough, when he could be got to think about anything besides his scribbling.

A neighbour's son was induced by the bribe of a few sous to take Heinrich's place as swineherd for an hour, while he came to hear the result of the consultation upon his destiny. His bright blue eyes sparkled, and he showed all his white teeth in a grin of enthusiastic delight when the Prince offered to take him to Paris—clothe, feed, watch over him, and, above all, have him educated as a painter.

"O, sir," he said, "will you be really so good? Shall I indeed learn to draw? O, I am so happy, so happy! Get me my Sunday clothes, mother,—let me get ready at once!"

"You are very glad to go then, Heinrich, and leave your poor old mother?" said la Mère Kaysar, putting her apron to her eyes.

"I forgot I must leave you," said the boy, his honest heart swelling at the prospect of abandoning his home, which had not before entered into his calculations. "I couldn't stand never seeing you or Susette," he went on, bursting into tears as he spoke. "Thank you kindly, sir, for your offer, but I must not leave my mother."

The Prince explained that he had no wish to separate them wholly, gave the mother his card, and recommended her to confer with her friends, while he himself put up at an inn in the neighbourhood.

The result of the deliberation between la Mère Kaysar and the good curé, whom she consulted in the matter, was that Heinrich's not very extensive wardrobe was packed up in a cotton handkerchief, and he and his mother came at the time appointed to the Three Crowns, where the Prince was reposing after such a dinner as a way-side inn

could furnish. They gratefully accepted his noble offer, and he renewed his promises of a pension to the mother, and of watchful care for the son; and they set off that evening on their journey to Paris.

Arrived there, the little rustic was suitably dressed, and then, through the Prince's influence, permission was gained for him to study at the Academy. As he was so young he only spent a part of the day there; the rest was passed at a school, that his general education might be advanced. He slept at the Prince's house, whose heart he completely won by his amiable disposition, good sense, and the quickness with which he gained the address and manners of those about him. In the summer he returned to his village for a few weeks; his mother was delighted to see him so strong and tall, and exactly like a great gentleman, as she said; but she could not see any improvement in his drawing; his studies from the antique, heads with every kind of expression, and legs and arms in all imaginable attitudes, only reminded her of an hospital,—they were not half so pretty as the drawings he used to make of Susette and the baby, or the groups round the village well.

He visited her every year, till he went to Italy and other countries for the purpose of studying his art. Long ere he returned, he could earn money enough to make her an allowance, which caused her to pass for a rich woman in her village.

When he revisited Paris, and his generous protector, a very high place was offered him in the Academy; but he would not accept it without first consulting the Prince, and to him he expressed a wish to return to Belgium.

"Do not think me ungrateful," he said; "I will agree to any plan you propose; you have been as a father to me, and I will render you always the willing obedience of a child. But I must tell you frankly, I should like to dedicate what talent God has given me to my country, to be ranked among the Flemish painters. But I put myself in your hands."

The Prince admired the patriotic feelings of the young man, and gave a willing assent to his return. He settled in Antwerp, and became the head of the Academy there. His distinguished manners, handsome figure, and courteous address, soon gained him the entrée into the best circles. No one could ever have imagined that the graceful, polished gentleman, who took his place so easily and naturally among the highest in the land, had ever been a poor peasant boy. Not that he sought to conceal his origin; far from it, he was very fond of relating the story of his early poverty and his patron's munificence; but his was one of those natures to whom refinement is natural; his artist mind assimilated to itself as its proper aliment all that was graceful and beautiful. He married a lady of good family, who brought her husband, not only a considerable fortune, but the more valuable gifts of a noble mind and amiable temper.

Heinrich Kaysar *lives* happy and respected; and with our hearty wishes that so he may long remain, we will close this true story of the SWINEHERD PAINTER OF ANTWERP. E. ACTON.



COLDSTREAM.



LARGE party is assembled to celebrate the feast of St. Partridge at Ravelstoke Hall, an old country house about two miles distant from the north-west coast of Devon. The various branches of English society are very fairly represented by its component parts. There are two peers, three members of the lower house, some Guardsmen, some undergraduates, a clergyman, and a lieutenant in the navy. But our hero is not a representative man: yet he belongs to a class which, called into existence by the accumulated wealth of the nineteenth century, is ever on the increase.

Frederick Tyrawley resembles Sir Charles Coldstream, inasmuch as he has been everywhere and done everything; but he is by no means used up, and can still take an

interest in whatever his hand finds to do. Nor is his everything everybody else's everything. It is not bounded by Jerusalem and the pyramids.

Mr. Tyrawley has fought in more than one state of South America, and has wandered for more than two years from isle to isle of the Pacific. A mysterious reputation hovers round him. He is supposed to have done many things, but no one is very clear what they are; and it is not likely that much information on the point will be obtained from him, for he seldom talks much, and never speaks of himself. His present mission appears to be to kill partridges, play cricket, and dress himself. Not that it must be supposed that he has ever been in the habit of wearing less clothing than the custom of the country in which he may have been located required; but only that at the

present time he devoted much attention to buff waistcoats and gauze neck-ties, braided coats, and curled mustachios.

Such as he is, however, he is an object of interest to the feminine portion of the party at Ravelstoke Hall; for he is rich and handsome, as well as mysterious, and he cannot be more than two-and-thirty. And the ladies at Ravelstoke outnumber the men: for although it is still rare for the fair sex to participate actively in the saturnalia of the partridge-god, they will always be found hovering in considerable numbers on the outskirts of the feast: and the varieties of the British lady are fairly represented.

There are some mammas with daughters to marry, and there are some daughters with a mamma to prevent marrying again, which is, perhaps, the most difficult thing of the two, as she has an income in her own right. There are blondes and brunettes, and pretty, brown-haired, brown-eyed girls who hover between the two orders, and combine the most dangerous characteristics of both, who can wear both blue and pink, and who look prettier in the one colour than they do in the other; but who always command your suffrage in favour of that which they are wearing when you look at them.

And there is Constance Baynton with grey eyes and black hair. And the nicest critic of feminine appearance might be defied to state what she had worn, half an hour after he left her; for no one can ever look at anything except her face.

Yet Constance is three-and-twenty, and still unmarried. Alas, what cowards men are! The fact is that Constance is very clever; but as Mrs. Mellish (the widow) says, "not clever enough to hide it."

Is she a little vexed at her present condition? Certainly she does not exhibit any tendency to carry out Mrs. Mellish's suggestion, if it has ever been repeated to her. The young men are more afraid of her than ever; and certainly she does say very sharp things, sometimes. Especially she is severe upon idlers, the butterflies of fashionable existence. She appears to consider that she has a special mission to arouse them; but they do not appear to like being lectured. With the young ladies she is a great favourite, for she is very affectionate; and though so beautiful and distinguished, she has proved herself to be not so dangerous a rival as might have been expected. Indeed, it has happened, more than once, that male admiration, rebounding from the hard surface of her manner, has found more yielding metal in the bosoms of her particular friends. Besides, she is always ready to lead the van in the general attack upon the male sex, when the ladies retire to the drawing-room.

Not that she ever says anything behind their backs she would not be ready to repeat to their faces; but in that course probably she would not meet with such general support.

In Mr. Tyrawley she affected to disbelieve. She stated as her opinion to her intimate friends, that she did not believe he ever had done, or ever would do anything worth doing; but that he plumed himself on a cheap reputation, which, as all were ignorant of its foundation, no one could possibly impugn.

There is reason to believe that in this instance Miss Constance was not as conscientious as usual; but that she really entertained a higher opinion of the gentleman than she chose to confess. He certainly was not afraid of her, and had even dared to contradict her favourite theory of the general worthlessness of English gentlemen of the nineteenth century. It was one wet morning when she had been reading Scott to three or four of her particular friends,—and it must be confessed that she read remarkably well,—that she began to lament the decline of chivalry. Tyrawley was sitting half in and half out of range. Perhaps she talked a little at him. At any rate he chose to accept the challenge.

"I cannot agree with you, Miss Baynton," he said. "It is true we no longer wear ladies' gloves in our helmets, nor do we compel harmless individuals, who possibly may have sweethearts of their own, to admit the superiority of our lady love at the point of the lance; but of all that was good in chivalry, of courage, truth, honour, enterprise, self-sacrifice, you will find as much in the nineteenth century as in the twelfth."

He brightened up as he spoke, and it was quite evident that he believed what he said, a circumstance which always gives an advantage to a disputant.

More than one pair of bright eyes smiled approval, and Miss Constance saw a probability of a defection from her ranks. She changed her tactics.

"You are too moderate in your claims for your contemporaries, Mr. Tyrawley. If I remember right, modesty has always been considered a qualification of a true knight."

"I am not ashamed to speak the truth," he replied; "your theory would have been more tenable before the days of the Crimean war and the Indian mutiny; but the men who lit their cigars in the trenches of the Redan, and who carried the gate of Delhi, may bear comparison with Bayard, or Cœur de Lion."

"Oh! I do not allude to our soldiers," said she, "of course, I know they are brave; but,"—and here she hesitated a moment, till possibly piqued because her usual success had not attended her in the passage of arms, she concluded,—"but to our idle gentlemen, who seem to have no heart for anything."

Tyrawley smiled. "Possibly you may judge too much by the outside," he said. "I am inclined to fancy that some of those whom you are pleased to call idle gentlemen would be found to have heart enough for anything that honour, or duty, or even chivalry, could find for them to do."

"I hope you are right," said Miss Constance, with a slightly perceptible curl of her upper lip, which implied that she did not think so.

Tyrawley bowed, and the conversation terminated a few minutes afterwards; when he had left the room, the conversation of the young ladies was interrupted by Master George Baynton, aged fourteen, who suddenly attacked his sister.

"I think you are wrong, you know, when you call Tyrawley a humbug."

"My dear," said Constance, with a start, "I never said anything so ru—"

"Well, you implied it, you know, in your girl's

words, and I think you make a mistake; for he can shoot like one o'clock, never misses a thing, and I hear he can ride no end. He was rather out of practice in his cricket when he came down; but he is improving every day. You should have seen the hit he made yesterday—right up to the cedars."

"Do you think there is nothing else for a man to do, but ride, and shoot, and play cricket?"

"Oh! that's all very well; but you should hear what Merton, our second master says; and a great brick he is, too. 'Whatever you do, do it as well as you can, whether it's cricket or verses.' And I believe if Tyrawley had to fight, he'd go in and win, and no mistake."

"Ah!" said Constance, with a sigh, "he has evidently—what is it you boys call it?—tipped you. Isn't it?"

Indignant at this insult, George walked off to find his friend, and have a lesson in billiards.

The day lingered on, after the usual fashion of wet days in September in full country houses. There was a little dancing after dinner; but all retired early in hopes of a finer day on the morrow.

Tyrawley had some letters to write, so that it was past two before he thought of going to bed. He always slept with his window open, and as he threw up the sash, a fierce gust of wind blew out his candles, and blew down the looking-glass.

"Pleasant, by Jove!" he soliloquised. "I wonder whether it's smashed—unlucky to break a looking-glass—I'm hanged if I know where the matches are; never mind; I can find my way to bed in the dark. What a night," as a flash of lightning illumined the room for a moment, and he bent out of the window. "The wind must be about nor-nor-west. Cheerful for anything coming up to Bristol from the southward. I wonder what a storm is like on this coast. I have a great mind to go and see. I shall never be able to get that hall-door open without waking them up; what a nuisance! Stay, capital idea! I'll go by the window."

Before starting upon his expedition, he changed the remains of his evening dress (for he had been writing in his dressing-gown) for a flannel shirt and trousers, whilst a short pea-jacket and glazed hat completed his array. His room was on the first floor, and he had intended to drop from the window-sill; but the branch of an elm came so near, he found that unnecessary, as springing to it he was on the ground, like a cat, in an instant. He soon found his way across country "like a bird," to the edge of the cliff. The sea for miles seemed one sheet of foam.

But a flash of lightning discovered a group of figures about a quarter of a mile distant; and he distinguished shouts in the intervals of the storm.

He was soon amongst them, and he found that all eyes were turned on a vessel which had struck on a rock within two hundred yards of the cliff. It was evident that she would go to pieces under their very eyes.

"Is there no way of opening communication with her," he asked of an old coast-guard man.

"Why ye see, sir, we have sent to Bilford for Manby's rockets; but she must break up before they come."

"How far is it to Bilford?"

"Better than seven mile, your honour."

"If we could get a rope to them, we might save the crew."

"Every one of them, your honour; but it ain't possible."

"I think a man might swim out."

"The first wave would dash him to pieces against the cliff."

"What depth of water below?"

"The cliff goes down like a wall, forty fathom, at least."

"The deeper the better. What distance to the water?"

"A good fifty feet."

"Well, I have dived off the main yard of the Chesapeake. Now listen to me. Have you got some light, strong rope?"

"As much as you like."

"Well, take a double coil round my chest, and do you take care to pay it out fast enough as I draw upon it."

"You won't draw much after the first plunge; it will be the same thing as suicide, every bit."

"Well, we shall see. There's no time to be lost: lend me a knife."

And in an instant he whipped off his hat, boots, and pea-jacket, then with the knife he cut off its sleeves and passed the rope through them, that it might chafe him less.

The eyes of the old boatman brightened. There was evidently a method in his madness. "You are a very good swimmer, I suppose, sir?"

"I have dived through the surf at Nukuheva a few times."

"I never knew a white man that could do that."

Tyrawley smiled. "But whatever you do," he said, "mind and let me have plenty of rope. Now out of the way, my friends, and let me have a clear start."

He walked slowly to the edge of the cliff, looked over to see how much the rock shelved outwards; then returned, looked to see that there was plenty of rope for him to carry out, then took a short run, and leaped as if from the spring-board of a plunging-bath. He touched the water full five-and-twenty feet from the edge of the cliff. Down into its dark depth he went, like a plummet, but soon to rise again. As he reached the surface he saw the crest of a mighty wave a few yards in front of him—the wave that he had been told was to dash him lifeless against the cliff. But now his old experience of the Pacific stands him in good stead. For two moments he draws breath, then, ere it reaches him, he dives below its centre. The water dashes against the cliff, but the swimmer rises far beyond it. A faint cheer rises from the shore as they feel him draw upon the rope. The waves follow in succession, and he dives again and again, rising like an otter to take breath, making very steadily onward, though more below the water than above it.

We must now turn to the ship. The waves have made a clean breach over her bows. The crew are crowded upon the stern. They hold on to the bulwarks, and await the end, for no boat

can live in such a sea. Suddenly she is hailed from the waters. "Ship a-hoy!" shouts a loud clear voice, which makes itself heard above the storm. "Throw me a rope or a buoy!" The life-buoy was still hanging in its accustomed place by the mainmast. The captain almost mechanically takes it down, and with well-directed aim throws it within a yard or two of the swimmer. In a moment it is under his arms, and in half a minute he is on board.

"Come on board, sir," he says to the captain, pulling one of his wet curls professionally. The captain appeared to be regarding him as a visitor from the lower world; so, turning to the crew, he lifted up the rope he had brought from the shore. Then for the first time the object of his mission flashed upon their minds, and a desperate cheer broke forth from all hands, instantly echoed from the shore. Then a strong cable is attached to the small rope and drawn on board—then a second—and the communication is complete. But no time is to be lost, for the stern shows signs of breaking-up, and there is a lady passenger. Whilst the captain is planning a sort of chair in which she might be moved, Tyrawley lifts her up on his left arm, steadies himself with his right by the upper rope, and walks along the lower as if he had been a dancer. He is the first on shore, for no sailor would leave till the lady was safe. But they soon follow, and in five minutes the ship is clear—five minutes more, and no trace of her is left.

Ravelstoke Hall has been aroused by the news of the wreck, and Mr. Ravelstoke has just arrived with brandy and blankets. Him Tyrawley avoids; and, thinking he can be of no further use, he betakes himself across the country once more, and by the aid of the friendly elm regains his chamber without observation.

The lady, whom Tyrawley had deposited in a cottage, with a strong recommendation that she should go to sleep immediately, was soon carried off in triumph by Mr. Ravelstoke to the Hall, and welcomed by Lady Grace at half-past three in the morning. There were very few of the guests who slept undisturbed that night. The unusual noise in the house aroused everybody, and many excursions were made in unfinished costume to endeavour to ascertain what was going on. The excitement culminated when the miscellaneous assemblage who had conducted the captain and some of the crew to the Hall, after being well-supplied with ale and stronger liquida, conceived that it would be the correct thing to give three cheers at the hour of half-past five.

It was then that Lord Todmilton, an Irish peer, labouring under an erroneous impression that the house was attacked, was discovered on the landing-place, in array consisting principally of a short dressing-gown, flannel-waistcoat, and a fowling-piece.

Breakfast that morning was a desultory meal. People finished, and talked about the wreck, and began again. It seemed quite impossible to obtain anything like an accurate account of what had taken place. At last the captain appeared, and though almost overwhelmed by the multiplicity of questions, nevertheless between the intervals of

broiled ham and coffee, he managed to elucidate matters a little.

Then came the question, Who was it who swam out to the vessel. Tyrawley had only been at Ravelstoke a few days, and was a stranger in the neighbourhood. None of the servants had reached the coast till it was all over, so there had been no one to recognise him.

"I scarcely saw him," said the captain, "but he was a dark tallish man, with a great deal of beard."

"Was he a gentleman?" asked Miss Constance Baynton, who had been taking a deep interest in the whole affair.

"Well, d'ye see, Miss, I can't exactly say, for he hadn't much on; but, if he isn't, he'd make a good one, that I'll go bail for. He's the coolest hand I ever saw. Stay, now I think of it, I shouldn't wonder if he was a naval man, for he pulled his fore-lock, half-laughing-like, and said, 'Come on board, sir,' to me, when we pulled him up."

"Perhaps it was Rutherford," said Mr. Ravelstoke, naming the lieutenant in the navy, "he is tall and dark."

"And he has been letting his moustache grow since he came on shore," observed a young lady.

"Where is he?"

But Mr. Rutherford was gone down to the cliff to inspect the scene of the disaster.

"Begging your pardon, sir," said the butler, "it could not have been any gentleman stopping in the house, for the door was fastened till the people came down to tell you of the wreck."

At this moment—half-past ten, A.M.—Mr. Tyrawley walked into the breakfast-room. He was got up, if possible, more elaborately than usual.

"Now, here's a gentleman, captain, Mr. Tyrawley, who has been all over the world, and met with some strange adventures. I'll be bound he never saw anything to equal the affair of last night."

"You'd a nearish thing of it, captain?" inquired Tyrawley, speaking very slowly. His manner and appearance quite disarmed any suspicion the captain might have had of his identity.

"Five minutes more, sir, and Davy Jones's locker would have held us all. Begging your pardon, Miss," apologising to Constance.

The captain had already repeated the story a reasonable number of times, and was anxious to finish his breakfast. So Miss Constance gave it all for the benefit of Mr. Tyrawley, dressed in her own glowing periods.

Tyrawley made no observation upon her recital, but took a third egg.

"Well, Mr. Tyrawley," said she at last, "what do you think of the man who swam out to the wreck?"

"Why, I think, Miss Baynton,—I think," said he hesitating, "that he must have got very wet. And I sincerely hope he won't catch cold."

There was a general laugh at this, in which the captain joined; but it is to be feared that Miss Constance stamped her pretty little foot under the table.

Tyrawley turned, and began to talk to Miss Mellish, who was sitting on his right.

As he was speaking the door on his left opened, and Lady Grace Ravelstoke entered with the lady passenger. The lady heard him speak, and there are some voices which a woman never forgets, and the dangerous journey over the rope had not passed in silence.

She laid her hand upon his arm, and said, "Oh, sir, how can I thank you?"

Tyrawley rose as in duty bound, saying, "Do not speak of it, I did not know when I came off, that I was to have the pleasure of assisting you."

But the astonishment of the captain was beautiful to behold.

"Why you don't mean to say— Well, I never;—dash my wig—well I'm— Here, shake hands, sir, will you." And he stretched across the table a brawny hand, not much smaller than a shoulder of mutton.

The grip with which Tyrawley met his, seemed to do a great deal more to convince him of his identity, than the lady's recognition of their preserver.

The day was as wet as the preceding. Half-an-hour after breakfast, Mr. Tyrawley lounged into the back drawing-room. There sat Miss Constance Baynton, and, by the singular coincidence which favours lovers or historians, she sat alone.

Now Constance had made up her mind that she was bound to apologise to Mr. Tyrawley for her rude speeches of yesterday; she had also decided that she would compliment him on his gallant conduct.

She had, in fact, arranged a neat, quiet, cold, formal, appropriate form of words in which she would give her views expression. And how do you think she delivered them? She got up, said, "O Mr. Tyrawley!" and burst into tears.

If a proud woman's pride is a shield to thee, O man, as well as to her, against the arrows of love, remember, that if ever she throws it away—after she has compelled you to acknowledge its value—you are both left utterly defenceless.

Frederick Tyrawley capitulated at once. They are to be married this month. And if Mr. Tyrawley does not, at some future time, achieve a reputation which no mystery shall cloud, it will not be Mrs. Tyrawley's fault. HERBERT VAUGHAN.



AN AMERICAN APPLE FROLIC.

The stranger in New England is surprised not only by the gravity of its people, and the dissociation of women from such amusements as they have, but also by the absence of those festivals which are so common in other lands. This singularity deserves analysis; for which purpose it will be necessary to recur to the national antecedents. The Church of Rome arranges her calendar so as to associate devotional feeling with the change of seasons—the hope of seed-time, joy of harvest, beauty of summer, repose of winter—profiting by their spiritual symbolisation, whereof man has an instinctive, though vague, apprehension, as is manifested in Polytheistic religions. These festivals, wisely retained by England after the Reformation, were distasteful to the Puritan fathers of New England, from their pagan origin, as enjoined by prelatical authority, and because, according to their austere conception, mirth was unseemly and displeasing to heaven! Hence these semi-ancestors interdicted the festivals of their ancestral land, as heathenish and papistical; and consequently, between the influence of a dark Manichean creed and legislative enactments, cheerfulness was dissociated from religion and the daily life of men; imaginative delights were termed "carnal," and a gloom settled on the land. Now, as nature cannot be violently repressed in her legitimate action without positive injury, these innocent recreations being interdicted, the New Englander found in less praiseworthy pursuits gratification for his desire of emotion. The later Evangel of Poor Richard, whereof the philosopher Franklin was the apostle, being enunciated, the pursuit of gain was consecrated as the prime object of life to an immortal being, and the sordid maxims of a penurious huxter were engrafted on the public policy of a great nation.

This exterminated many of the noblest impulses, and the imaginative love of beauty, branded as ungodly by the Puritans, was now regarded as unprofitable in a pecuniary light, and recreations were condemned wholesale as entailing loss of time. The



consequences of this system on the mode of thought and daily life may more easily be conceived than expressed. When the axe first rings in an American forest, its ravages are indiscriminate; no tree is spared to the lamenting Dryads as an element of beauty; the log cottage stands bare and unsightly without a tree to shelter it, without ought to bring its nakedness into harmony with the scene: trees are not so profitable as corn, and the apprehension of beauty, from lack of culture, has gradually withered from the American mind. Never is the cottage embowered in wealth of jessamine, honeysuckle, or roses, as in other lands—not even in New England; the American is nomadic, without local attachments, and without leisure; beauty, though all very well as an adjunct, to which he does not object, never urges him to exertion; if a flower appear in his garden, it is one that, like the purple potato blossom, has sordid profit and homely utility at its root. In like manner, unless they can be combined with profit, he eschews the innocent festivities that sweeten life, or enjoys laboriously. In the south, where vegetation is stimulated by light and heat into luxuriant growth and loveliness, the negro animal, oblivious of bondage, and living only in the present, is radiant with sensuous joy at all times; his enforced labour is cheered by carolling, the strains of the banjo recreate his indolence under the orange trees, or throw him into the rhythm of the dance. But the more reflective peasant of the north concentrates his thought too earnestly on his pursuits to give way to joyousness; his sensuous impulses are more under control. Yet there are certain popular merrymakings that might escape the observation of a stranger, and these take place during the desolation of winter. When the out-door labours of the year have closed, when he has garnered in the produce of his thrifty care, the New Englander finds leisure for unbending in a sedate characteristic fashion of his own,—but there is method in his madness, and calculation in his smile,—as though he sought to *utilize* his emotions!

Many rustic duties incident to winter, furnish opportunities for the combination of business and pleasure, which would engage a household many days, did it not, by associating others to its labour, dispose of it in one. Each family in turn throws its house open to the neighbours, invoking the assistance of the youth of the vicinity on some special day, with one eye to business and another to amusement; and doubtless these characteristic meetings aid to diffuse kindness of feeling. The ostensible object is pleasure, though work is the invariable accompaniment, and the fatigues of the session are terminated by a feast. They are looked forward to with extreme delight by all; for here the harmless village scandals are discussed, acquaintances made, courtships initiated. The noble English girl does not look to her presentation at court with more eager trepidation, than does the village maiden of New England to her introduction to the rustic youth convened on one of these solemn occasions; and beneath homely manners may frequently be discerned a pleasing undercurrent of romance. The names of these Saturnalia vary with

their pretexes. At a "Husking," the enveloping spathe is stripped from the maize ere it is issued as fodder for cattle, or preparatory to its despatch to the mill, whence it will return as meal. At an "Apple Frolic," the apples or peaches that year yielded by the orchard are pared, cut, and strung for drying, constituting in that form an important element of American diet, as pastry, &c., and of export to other lands. Let us be spectators of one of the last *ab ovo ad malum*, from the germinal invitation to the apple-paring and the supper.

The Village of Harmony bears with approbation that Abijah Sprague will be glad to see his young friends at Cedar Creek on a certain afternoon: the pretext, apples; the object, fun; of course they will dance, for the old man plays the violin *right smart*. Miss S. is widely known for her culinary skill, which each anticipates with naive pleasure the opportunity of testing personally; and being kindly and hospitable, no stinginess is to be apprehended in her arrangements. The appointed day arrives. To the delight of all, the snow has ended in a sharp frost that will render the sleighing excellent. The guests convening from many miles round of course have to travel in sleighs, a word that will conjure up to many vague recollections of the Arctic regions, and indistinct apprehension of the vehicle so named. As there are diverse orders of wheeled carriages, so are there likewise of sleighs. That of him clothed in purple and fine linen is a glittering spring carriage, glass windowed, lined with costly furs, drawn by blood horses; that of the rustic is the body of a common open waggon, lifted from its wheels and placed on iron-shod runners, whereto a pair of the plough horses are attached. Between the costly aristocratic vehicle skimming along Broadway and the country conveyance are all imaginable varieties; the mode of transit on skates is common to all, and to prevent accidents from the noiselessness of their motion, the horses are always bedizened with bells to give due warning to other wayfarers of their fleet approach.

That wherein we are about to hasten to the revel awaits us at the door, once and again to be a waggon devoted to drudgery, now a triumphal car for beauty. Raised only a couple of inches from the snow, a capsize cannot be dangerous; it will accommodate six, eight, nay more persons, for in this cold season the damsels will not object to the additional warmth resulting from close stowage; and then the situation has its charm, whereon silence is discreet. Thick buffalo robes dressed by painted Indians amid the Rocky Mountains, and bearskins, trophies of our own prowess in New England forests, are thickly piled above more homely straw. The horses, decorated with gay ribbons, paw the ground impatiently, anticipating the panting rapture of swift motion, and toss their heads that they may be gladdened by the tinkling of their bells. So from the house issue the damsels in somewhat cumbersome attire, in warm calashes, whence flash such eyes—ah me! it is dangerous to look too earnestly on them; let us rather with tender solicitude aid in ensconcing them amid the furs, like gems in a casket, covering them up so that nought remains visible but their fair faces peeping out from their warm covert.

Frequent are the admonitions of the careful elders clustered in the porch, designed to moderate the boisterousness of "us youth" accompanying; many the injunctions to the rustic Phaeton to restrain his ardor and be heedful of their tender darlings; hearty the responsive vows of that daring youth as he takes his seat, attired somewhat like Crusoe in shaggy coat, a foxskin cap with brush gracefully pendent over his left ear, and crimson leggings. He seizes the whip, uselessly symbolical of his functions, for at a slight agitation of the reins the horses bound suddenly forward amid the pretty alarm of the maidens, and fond farewells to the old folks, as though they were bound to the Pole. The anxious parents watch us as we whirl from the yard into outer space, avoiding with nice dexterity collision on the one hand with the Scylla of the haystacks, or on the other a lapse into the slippery Charybdis of the pond. As we vanish from the dim eyes murmuring broken blessings on the happy travellers, they retreat to the snug repose of their elbow-chairs beside the blazing fire, recalling pensively the joys of their own youth, or relapsing into the vague reverie of old age, that is rather a dreamy consciousness of well-being than any determinate thought.

Away we speed with our chorus of sweet voices down the leafless village avenue, the urchins pausing in their sports to shout encouragingly after us. The horses emulatively put forth their strength, shaking melodious tinklings like dewdrops from their arched necks, their hoofs eliciting no sound from the surface over which they seem to fly unimpeded by their burden, so smoothly does it glide upon its polished iron keel. The village has fled as rapidly as on the stage is the transition from city to wilderness, being replaced by an open region heaving in long undulations like a frozen foamy ocean, bearing at intervals upon its expanse the floating wrecks of rugged oaks with black distorted branches. The wind is keen and pure, stimulating the sense, bringing a crimson glow of health into the soft cheeks of the damsels, and perchance slightly touching the tips of their saucy little noses, giving them a charming bacchanalian air. The sky is pale and cloudless, and the sun, though his rays be devoid of warmth, invests everything with cheerful radiance; each thorn bush glitters with diamonds, and the snowy plain coruscates with iris light. Anon we dive into a lonely hollow—once the haunt of birds—where a little stream used to prattle amid the wild cherry trees, now silent and sad. The horse-hoofs ring sharply on the ice, scattering around crystal fragments that echo on the ear in falling like clouds upon the coffin of a beloved one; but another summer will gleam on either—an awakening from the trance of death. As we strain up the opposed ascent we come unexpectedly upon a belated racoon that has strayed unwisely from his hollow tree in quest of provant. Alarmed at the encounter, he takes to fearful flight, pursued by derisive cheers. Despite his snug fur and comfortable portliness of girth, whereof he now first apprehends certain inconveniences, he exhibits marvellous agility in his effort to avoid our society: his bushy tail streams in the air like a flag of defiance as he hastens across the open country, not with a run, but

an interlinked series of convulsive springs. Needless terror—we have neither leisure nor inclination to pursue. Now we crash through a forest, shaking the glittering icicles and scarlet berries from the thickets; startling the partridges that are pruning their feathers in the sunny openings, or the rabbits issued from their lairs to browse on the tender moss sheltered by the snow. They start, not so much from fear as from surprise and discomposure; they seem to know that no murderous weapon is in our joyous host, for they only move a little out of our path and turn to gaze at us: we of the sterner sex for once sympathise in the gentle feelings with which the girls regard the harmless creatures, and forget our instinct of slaughter.

Thus we proceed, finding unwonted interest in common things, now in a dark ravine, now on a hilly crest, according to the undulations of the ground, appearing and disappearing alternately, like a skiff tossed upon heaving ocean billows, till, after a transit of eight miles, we reach our destination, a number of sleighs in the yard showing that the assemblage is large, and a cheerful crowd being assembled out of doors to greet us, warned of our approach by the ringing sleigh-bells. Relieving the damsels from their enthrallment, we yield them to the embraces of the fair waiters in the porch.

Ah me! what prodigality of endearments do they lavish on each other, tantalising maliciously us envious bystanders! Then flutteringly they take flight, like a flock of doves, into some secret haunt hidden from profane eyes, about which we can only vaguely speculate, leaving us to unhappiness and care for our gallant horses, who seem to have truly enjoyed themselves, for their eyes sparkle, and their nostrils are distended, not having turned a hair. This duty accomplished, we enter the kitchen, the common hall, in company, to pay our respects to the good dame, whose fair, buxom face glows with smiles, though a "trace of anxiety may also be discerned, for she is on hospitable care intent."

We do not seat ourselves, but cluster round the great fire, where lies a Christmas log that will burn a week, crackling loudly a cheerful welcome to us. And a very pleasant sensation is ours, for though not cold, it is an agreeable contrast to the outer atmosphere, and there is somewhat pleasing in all contrasts for a time. It flashes on the crockery and *batterie de cuisine* that glitters like silver on its shelves against the dark wainscot, reflecting its light fitfully, and penetrates even amid the shadows lurking in the rafters heavy with unctuous fitches. The kitchen of a farmhouse is the room habitually used by the family; the parlour is rather for show and state occasions, and has a prim aspect, producing a feeling of constraint opposed to the ease and comfort inspired by the familiar aspect of the other, as a man is more at ease in his every day garments than in his Sunday coat and stiff cravat. The kitchen generally occupies an entire end of the dwelling with its adjacent dairy, laundry, and store-room.

Here assembled, we visitors of the ruder sex exchange talk on rural matters, the late harvest, the weather, and cattle, with an occasional gibe about some nascent love affair, trying to seem

cheerful and careless as may be, though sometimes glancing furtively at the door in expectation of the re-appearance of the maidens, to meet whom in fact we chiefly came. At last subdued, silvery laughter is heard at the door—it opens, and they blushing, shyly enter, divested of their disfiguring travelling garb, and arrayed in neat stuff or cotton dresses, coming up in prim puritan fashion to their snowy throats, round which even are coyly wreathed silken kerchiefs. Their hair, hidden by no envious cape, is arranged in glossy folds uniting together in a Grecian knot, while in their faces is discernible a struggle between maiden bashfulness and timid pleasure. The American girl, from the spirituality and delicacy of her features, and the fragility of her form, has always an air of great refinement, but unhappily she is not long-lived. After some hesitating compliments not displeasedly received, some shy stolen glances and timid words interchanged between secret lovers, the nominal business for which we assembled is entered on. The young men, vying in evincing their athletic strength before such bright eyes, bear in at a signal from the adjoining store-room great baskets of apples—Hesperian treasures that would have aroused our passionate admiration and desire in boyhood, and that might have been safely gratified without any subsequent retributive anguish or sad reflections consequent on unwise deglutition of immature enjoyments. These are various in flavour and aspect—pale sea green—rich crimson—streaked red—amber—golden, similar to that the Trojan boy gave to the Queen of Love, whom we would surely imitate in presenting it to these fair women, her daughters, rather than to any other goddesses. The furniture having previously been all removed so as to leave the floor clear, it is now covered with the baskets of fruit brought in. On their appearance, each maiden, from a supply displayed upon a side-table, takes a goodly needle and a ball of cotton yarn, symbols appropriate to her sex and indicative of her share in the coming operations: each youth produces a clasp knife—long, keen, and glittering. An accidental spectator might infer that these were the apples of discord—that he had chanced upon a passage of arms—the opening of a fray, wherein these stalwart rustics were about to contend for the smiles of those fair girls; and so truly they are, though in a more favourable fashion, as is evidenced by the pleasant countenances of the actors. Distinct groups are at once formed, a prodigious basket the nucleus of each, the sexes being pretty equally distributed according to their individual preferences, save when some rustic coquette has unfairly monopolised the attention of several lads, idlers perchance, fancy free, or fickle ones wiled from those legitimately entitled to their attendance. Such an arrangement being likely to interfere with business, since there would be more flirting than apple-paring, Miss Sprague discourteously but playfully taunts, or direct injunction on the unfaithful to return to their forlorn damsels, who are silently remonstrating with sad entreating eyes.

Acknowledged lovers select remote corners, or are delicately inducted therein, where they may indulge in those sweet words that never weary.

Seats there are none; but the floor is fair enough to eat from; and what attitude can better display the grace of a girl than a seat thereon, especially if she have pretty feet and ankles, as New England girls mostly have? And it may be ascertained directly who has not, by the discretion with which she withdraws hers from observation, so diverse from the skill evinced by others in the arrangement of their perverse drapery so as to show their beauty. To work: a lad seizes an apple, and, in the twinkling of an eye, passes it to another, divested of its radiant skin. This one cuts it into longitudinal slices, so that the pipes drop out. These sections a girl threads as they fall, successively, in garlands containing the substance of from twenty to thirty apples. When the basket is exhausted, as has been ascertained by hands searching among the exuvise, and exchanging perchance a furtive pressure, the rinds are ejected, and the strung proceeds placed in their stead. Those glowing fruit have disappeared, and there remain these strung fragments that in a few days will have shrivelled up into the semblance of leather; all the external beauty is destined to feed hogs! How similar to the metamorphosis of life, when the heart, losing all its freshness, degenerates into a tough muscular contrivance for the mechanical action necessary to money-making existence; when the radiance has faded that was its spiritual effluence and life, rejected as worthless, fit only for dreamers. Were it not perchance better that the apple should be eaten in all its beauty and aroma, than survive to such tasteless utilities! Those whom the gods love die young. Is not the American partiality for dried apples speculatively characteristic?

To return to our apples. Much emulation prevails among the different groups in the rapid completion of their task. Successively the transformed results are borne into the storeroom to be replaced by fresh apples until the whole are completed. The lads vie in exhibiting their dexterity with their knives before the damsels, who, nimble as are their fingers in threading the dissected fruit, are yet nimbler with their tongues in enlivening their attendants by that railleury between jest and earnest, that attracts, while bewildering as to its precise intent, of which the elucidation is vainly sought in the laughing eyes. Great is the hilarity, and the greater that the elders are not present to discourage it. We ourselves have got into a quiet corner with a fair-haired beauty, who has been tormenting us for months. Her assent to the present fruit partnership has given us certain hopes; and we have been so earnestly gazing into the depths of her blue eyes, that we have neglected other duties; and when the rest have done a fabulous amount of work, we are found to be yet in our first basket, surrounded by the laughing rout, and overwhelmed by sarcastic offers of assistance; whereas we should wax wroth, were not comfort derivable from the conscious blush of the blue-eyed enlaver. How many baskets of goodly fruit we have transformed into profitable ruin would need an arithmetician to calculate; old Abijah Sprague rubs his hands cheerily, and the buxom hostess is busy superintending the re-introduction of the banished

tables. Candles have long been lighted superfluously, for the blaze of the fire has thrown sufficient light on our proceedings, leaving those convenient shadows that favoured an accidental clasp of hands, nay, even of a stolen kiss perchance. The tables reinstated, preparations are made to recruit our weariness. Fat Jedediah Holmes, the seat of whose soul must be his diaphragm, who had peeped into the larder, informed us early in the evening, in an unctuous whisper, of the various good things he had seen there, in meditation on which doubtless he has been engaged hitherto; his little eyes now twinkle with gladness as he sees the rustic delicacies arranged upon the festive board: cold roast pig—not a blossom, but a matured flower in all its swinish beauty and fragrance—flanked by roast turkeys, ham, grouse; baked beans, apple sauce, Indian bread, apple pies, delicate cakes of various kinds filling up the intervals. Cider sparkles in portly jugs, with coffee for those who prefer it. Abijah acts as croupier to Miss Sprague, who invites the young folks to seat themselves on the long benches on either hand. Some tact is needed to seat the damsels as they would wish, without requiring them to state their preferences more openly than befits a maidenly reserve. We are placed next to those bewildering blue eyes, that are, however, provokingly directed to her plate—dear angel, what an excellent appetite she has!—but she is not singular; exercise, the cold weather, and a good conscience renders us all valiant trenchermen and women: our friend Jedediah's eyes fairly start from his head in consequence of his exertions; he is never gallant at meal times—he is too busy. Fearing that he is unwell, from the distress he manifests toward the close of the symposium, we sympathisingly suggest a glass of water. "You darned fool," he gasps, thankfully, "if I had room left for water, do you suppose I would not have eaten more pig?" What could be replied to such an argument?

At length, appetite being appeased, the guests rise, the tables again emigrate, and old Abijah produces that celebrated violin, at the sound of which everybody becomes harmoniously convulsed. Everybody dances with everybody, and they do not seem at all lethargic after their late trencher-work. We ourselves dance a little to the inspiring rhythms of the "Arkansas Tra-

veller" with the blue-eyed charmer. But joys must have an end. We go out to the stables, for it is eleven o'clock, and harness up our teams; the damsels vanish to their secret retreat, shortly to reappear equipped for travel. Fresh kissing (among the ladies), hands shaken, farewells said, expressions of delight in having spent so pleasant an evening. The hospitable hostess makes her appearance with a prodigious jug, whence she presents the parting guest with a glass of some rich ambrosia, termed egg-nogg, designed, as she says in a motherly way, as a preventive to the cold night-air.

We enter our respective sleighs, departing in various directions. Again our gallant steeds breast the keen air, dashing homeward over the white plain beneath the glittering stars. Another sleigh going in the same direction, naturally a race ensues. The girls, dear creatures! becoming excited, urge on our too willing charioteer, the consequence of which is, that in the earnestness of the struggle, he runs us against a stump emergent from the snow, and with a sudden jar we are thrown out on the ground. But such an occurrence is devoid of danger, the snow yields to our weight, being soft as a feather bed. Arising thence laughingly, and shaking their ruffled plumage to free it from any adhering crystals, the damsels permit us to replace them, rather enjoying the occurrence than otherwise. The night is musical with their ringing laughter and soft voices, and Phaeton beguiles the road by waking the astonished "night owl with a catch." Towards the close of the journey, however, they mostly relapse into musing silence—for even joy wearies—whence they are aroused only by the reappearance of the old familiar scenes. At length we desecry the light in the happy home where love is waking; the watch-dog rushes out at the clangour of the approaching bells to welcome us with exultant look. We reach the door, the revellers enter, the horses retreat to their warm bed, a murmur of glad voices arises, with questionings and replies, succeeded by a temporary silence; then the voice of prayer and praise ascends for the safe family reunion; the house-

hold separate to their respective dormitories; lights flit from room to room, but shortly are extinguished, and the house slumbers in darkness beneath the watchful stars, haunted perchance by dreams of the past gladness of the Apple-frolic.

FRANCIS MORTON.



CROSSBONES' FATHER.



WHENEVER a new fellow came to MacLaren's, he was sure to be pumped pretty dry without loss of time, as regarded his name, his father's occupation, and the number and appearance of his sisters. Other points were discussed more at leisure.

MacLaren's, you must know, was situated in a village a few miles out of Liverpool; there were nearly sixty fellows there, so you may be sure several of them had made up their minds to go to sea as soon as ever they left school: and as two or three of these slept in my bedroom—the "juniors" room—that will account for what took place there after old Wiggy took away the candle every night. Old Wiggy was the French master, and if you could have seen his head—well, never mind.

Among the other impositions on parents which were set forth in MacLaren's prospectus, none of which were ever kept to, except perhaps the "experienced dentist," who used to come every half, and take out all the best double teeth in the fellows' heads; amongst these, I say, it was stated that "a library of well-selected books is provided for the use of the young gentlemen." Now I appeal to any one who went there, if there ever was a greater crammer than this. What does well selected mean, I should like to know? Are "Principles of Geology," or "Life of Rev. Benjamin Bubb," or "General Gazetteer," or "Treatise on Conic Sections," well selected? I suppose

next they'll call the Latin Grammar and Arithmetic a well-selected library of books. To be sure, there were two or three odd volumes of the "Waverley Novels," but as they were all the middles of the tales, of course that took a good deal from the interest of reading them. The only two really good books in the lot were "Curiosities of Nature and Art," and "Lives of Buccaneers and Pirates." These two were always in the hands of some of the "juniors," and were read out in the bedroom so often, that at last we could have done almost as well without the books as with them. (Whoever read them had to sit on the floor in one corner with the candle partly under a bed for fear of surprises.) The "Pirates" was, of course, the greater favourite of the two, and Calomel I do really think knew it all off from one end to the other; and was always persuading fellows to walk the plank by means of a bolster off the beds on to the floor; and building caves with the bedclothes. He got tired of that after he was pulled out of his cave one night by MacLaren, and walked into with a slipper. The fellows were sorry for old Calomel, of course, but it was great fun for them, and they couldn't help larking him a good deal about the idea of a pirate being had out of his cave and slipped. Well, this brings me to what I was going to say. One night, in the middle of a half, after we had gone to bed, MacLaren came into our room with a candle and a new fellow. He told us the new fellow's name was Hartley; waited till he undressed, watched him into bed with little Binna, next bed to Calomel, wished us good-night, told us to go to sleep, and left us. Go to sleep, O yes, I dare say! The minute the sitting-room door was heard to slam upon MacLaren, you may fancy, if you can, the volley of questions directed at Binna's bed.

The new chap was very talkative: said he had been living with his aunt in Yorkshire for years, but that she having suddenly got married, he had been sent home to Liverpool, and thence to Mac's. Had both brothers and sisters, but having been so little at home didn't know much about them. He asked if Mac was very strict; and when we said "we believed him; wasn't he, just?" he said he was afraid it wouldn't suit him, for that he had been used to his own flog in Yorkshire: and then went on to that extent about guns, horses, and dogs, that Calomel at last asked him, rather drily, if he had nothing left to show for all this? He replied that he had a watch which his aunt had given him.

"Oh," says Calomel, "a watch is nothing: my father has two, a chronometer and a repeater."

"And mine," retorted the new chap, "has three."

In short, it became a regular bragging match between the two; and if the new fellow told as many lies as to our certain knowledge Calomel did, why he was a pretty good hand at it, that's all. In spite of all Dobbs could say though, the new chap always trumped his best cards: when Dobbs mentioned a pony at home (which we knew he hadn't got), Hartley was down on him with

his aunt's stables, and when Calomel spoke of a pistol which he possessed, the other declared that Dobbs should only have seen the rabbit-shooting in Yorkshire, and moreover stated that there were hanging up in his father's house in Liverpool two guns, four pistols, and a sword, of which he intended to avail himself during the next holidays.

"By the bye," said Calomel, rather sneeringly, (and we all at once remembered that the question hadn't been asked before, but it was out of all rule, you see, a fellow coming in in the dark): "what is your father?"

"My father?" said the new chap very quietly, "Oh, he's a pirate."

"A what?" shouted Calomel, jumping straight upright in bed, and so loud, that the other had only time to repeat in the same matter-of-fact way "A pirate," before we heard old Mac come out of the sitting-room, and along the passage to our door. Down went Dobbs in such a hurry, that we heard his head go with a great bang against the bed's; so that he couldn't help giving a loud "Oh!" though the rest of us were breathing very hard, to make believe we were asleep.

Mac called out that if he heard any more noise, he would do what should keep us awake for some time, and then went off.

More would very likely have been said then, so great was the sensation caused by the new fellow's declaration, but as we didn't hear Mac's sitting-room door shut again, we couldn't tell but that he was somewhere listening.

Not that there was anything of the sneak in Mac; only he liked to catch fellows at it. Very different to old Wiggy, whose real name was Girard, and who was hated by everybody for coaxing (or coggling as we used to call it) till he got something against the fellows, and then making their knuckles black and blue with a big door key. There was no time to say much next morning, for every one always lay in bed as long as he dared after the first bell rang, and had only time to jump into his clothes, and get down to prayers before the second bell stopped. Calomel just asked once during dressing, so as to prevent any mistake, "What did you say your father was, last night, you sir?" But the reply was just given in the same cool way, "A pirate." Calomel said no more.

After breakfast, however, a lot of us got together in the play-ground, and talked the matter over. The existence of pirates was beyond question: there was no reason to doubt that they possessed sons like other people, and perhaps left their businesses to them; but we were not aware of any recorded case in which such sons had been sent to a "classical and commercial academy," as Mac's was called in the prospectus. We couldn't help allowing, however, that the new fellow's manner was favourable and convincing. We argued, too, that if this gentleman were really a pirate, it would account for the possession not only of the three watches, which were doubtless acquired in the exercise of his profession, but also of the guns, pistols, and sword, which would be to him in that case the merest necessities of existence. In short, most of us inclined to the belief, that the new fellow's story was true; though a few, headed by

Calomel, urged that we had only his word for it, and that we knew nothing of him. But then Calomel was jealous, and no wonder: he had been the chief authority on such points for so long, that he wasn't likely to relish giving in, as he would have to do, of course, to a fellow with such advantages of birth.

However, we agreed to ask Hartley more about it, and by way of beginning, we proposed that he should show us the watch his aunt had given him. He pulled it out at once: it was an old silver one, very nearly round, so that it made a great swelling upon his chest, as he wore it in his waistcoat pocket. It had a great effect on the fellows; it was just such a watch as might have been buried in an iron chest for ever so long, and though it didn't come from his father, but from his aunt, that was nothing; it was in the family. It clinched his story, and we christened him "Crossbones" on the spot. As for the watch, that always was called "Oliver Cromwell," it was so old and solid.

You may be sure we asked Crossbones a good many questions about his father, but at first he didn't seem to think much about the matter; and it was only after a week or two's listening to the bedroom readings that he began to let out by degrees, and gave us at different times a good many particulars: how that his father's vessel was a regular clipper, carried one hundred guns, had a crew of eighty men (many of them blacks), and was called the Blue Blazer; the guns he thought, when pressed on the point, were from one hundred and eighty to two hundred pounders. He stated, moreover, that the meals both of officers and crew were always served on gold plates and dishes, which were mere drugs on board by reason of their abundance; and that the only beverage ever touched was rum with gunpowder in it—all which his father had told him in moments of confidence.

This beat books into fits; and even Calomel felt that he must give in, which he did, and became a great chum of Crossbones. Between them they established a society, of which every member was to swear solemnly not to let out anything; which he couldn't have done if he wished, as there was nothing to let out. However, we all tied up the ends of our fingers with twine in the bedroom one night, and having pricked them with a quill pen, let them bleed into a gill cup, over which we then took the oath on a prayer-book. The chief rule was, that no member should speak to another member about the society's affairs, without first putting his right forefinger to the side of his nose, and saying, "Blood?" If all right, the other member put his finger to his nose, and said, "Thunder!" then they both whistled, and then it was all right. Of course everybody knew the other members, but it was necessary to be very particular—societies always are. Crossbones and Calomel were first and second officers, and at first everybody was doing nothing but whistling and bleeding and thundering; but after a time it got tiresome, having nothing more to say when you found you were at liberty to speak. Besides, the fellows got into a way of laughing so that they couldn't

whistle, and in a short time the society pretty well died out.

Then we took to digging caves, but after one fell in upon little Binns, and as nearly smothered him as a toucher, why that didn't prosper; so we had to fall back upon listening to Crossbones—and some wonderful things he told us. I don't

know whether it was from what he heard, or out of his own head, that one of the fellows, who was very clever that way, drew and coloured a representation of Crossbones' father, whiskered and moustached, in a green jacket edged with fur, red tights, big buff boots, and a brass helmet, with a drawn sword in one hand, and a black banner



with a skull upon it in the other. On a cannon close by hung a large blue cloak, supposed to be the means of hiding Crossbones' father's professional dress from the public when he came ashore to visit Crossbones and the rest of the family.

When this picture was shown to Crossbones he shook his head, as much as to say his father was not unlike it, but more so: so the lights were touched up a bit, and so many daggers and pistols hung about the figure, that you would have wondered there was room for them.

Well, during the midsummer holidays, as most of our set went out of town, none of us happened to see Crossbones; and when we got back to school, we found to our astonishment that he always fought shy of our favourite subject when it was brought up, took no interest in the bedroom stories, and gave up the presidency of the society, thereby settling it altogether. None of us could make out what had come over him (though the idea was started at one time that his father had been caught and hanged), and he lost a good deal of popularity: and I do believe none of us would have cared to see him in the holidays, but that on the last night of the half he redeemed

his character nobly, by volunteering to put eight-and-seventy cockchafers in old Wiggy's bed. Wiggy had quarrelled with Mac, and was leaving; and when next morning he came stamping with rage into the schoolroom, and called out to Mac, "Sare, dey have put censects een my bed!" we all felt that Crossbones was indeed still our friend, and we made it up to meet him the first Thursday after we got home.

When we met on that day—Crossbones, Calomel, I, and two other fellows—the first question was what we should do? We all voted for going straight down to the river, but Crossbones proposed bathing in an old claypit he knew of, where two people had been nearly drowned, and which was supposed to be forty feet deep in places. Of course that was very tempting, but we thought it too cold for bathing; and at last we settled that it was to be the docks, where, however, Crossbones seemed very unwilling to go. We asked him if his father was at home; but he said, No; he was in the West Indies, or some of those places, or else we might have gone on board his vessel.

On we went, however, and just as we got in sight of the river, a voice called out, "Well, Ned,

PRAWN CURRY.

whither bound, my lad?" and a man caught hold of Crossbones by the shoulder. Crossbones went as red as fire, and didn't know which way to look, but he said, very sheepishly, "Oh, nowhere particular," and was in a great hurry to be off. But the stranger was evidently not in a hurry, and turning to us, he said, "Servant, young gentlemen; schoolmates of Ned's, I expect: I'm his father." How we all stared at him and each other, you may fancy. Here was a man with a red face, dressed in blue pilot cloth, calling himself Crossbones' father. No daggers, nor pistols, nor banners, nor boots, nor red legs, nor brass helmets. There was the smell of rum about him, it is true, so strong that I was obliged to pull out my pocket-handkerchief and pretend to blow my nose, as he talked to us, but not a sign of the gunpowder.

Still we all felt, as appeared afterwards on comparing notes, that these things might admit of explanation, and that matters might turn out better than they looked; so when Crossbones' father said to him, "Ned, mayhap these young gents would like to have a look at the little craft," we jumped at the proposal, and eagerly followed him down to the pier. We couldn't talk, we were in such a state of expectation, and so not one word was said until Crossbones' father led the way on board a small sloop, rather larger than an ordinary fishing smack, with a big number 15 on the sail, and which I supposed must be a kind of captain's boat to the Blue Blazer. But no sooner were we well on board, than Calomel gave a long whistle, and then caught me such a slap on the back as nearly choked me: "It isn't a pirate, but a pilot," says he. And so it was. Crossbones' father was very kind to us; gave us biscuit and rum (which made us very ill afterwards), and did all he could to amuse us: but nothing could change the horrid fact of his being a quiet, respectable, seafaring man.

Crossbones wouldn't go ashore with us; he told me afterwards that he couldn't have stood our chaff: but I was so sorry for him, that, before I left, I said to him, "Crossbones, what made you tell us those confounded yarns?"

"Well," he said, "when I first went to Mac's I'd been so long in the middle of Yorkshire, that I didn't know the difference between a pilot and a pirate, and I thought my father was one. And when I heard from the book about pirates, I made up what I thought sounded best."

"But about the three watches, and the guns and pistols, Crossbones?"

"Well, then," said Crossbones, irritably, "what did Calomel brag in that way for? I wasn't going to be beaten by him."

Next half, Crossbones, from one cause or another, had about twenty fights with different fellows, and pirates went a good deal out of fashion.

C. P. WILLIAM.

I HAVE a weakness for prawns. For seven years I lived in a barbarous colony where they had no prawns. I shall not name that colony, because I have no desire to deter people of taste from going there; but for seven years I saw nothing like a prawn except some wretched potted shrimps embalmed in grease and red pepper. Homeward bound some months ago in a mail steamer, we ran into Galle harbour for coals. Now Galle is famed throughout the East for the most rapturous preparation of prawns, the most ecstatic aliment conceivable. To taste prawn curry at Ceylon makes one additionally grateful to Vasco de Gama for having found his way round the Cape. I had heard much on the voyage about these curried prawns and about the green cocoa-nut and artful concomitants used in preparing them, and the various accounts worked upon my fevered imagination till my brain was filled with prawns capering about like the lively monsters in a magnified drop of stagnant water.

"Any coals?" said the captain; "any news?" asked the passengers; "any prawns?" whispered I, in a voice husky with emotion, for I trembled for the answer.

"Plenty prawns," was the reply, and down the ship's side I went into a sort of long washing-tub, kept from capsizing by a floating counterpoise about three yards off. My conductor was a Cingalese commissionaire of pale gingerbread complexion, who was attired in a very small quantity of white calico and a tortoiseshell comb. We fought our way through mendicants, jewel-peddlers with their Birmingham rubbish tenderly bedded in white wool, and a bristling array of paper umbrellas thrust forward for purchase at sixpence each. Through this ordeal I passed scatheless, all but a few shillings, for which I obtained an umbrella, two or three fans, a gold ring with rubies like red currants, an ebony walking-stick, and half a dozen pine-apples. We found an hotel, a stately Portuguese mansion of the olden time, through the door of which you might have driven a waggon of hay. The proprietor was smoking in a Manila cane chair, with a boy and a feather brush behind to intimidate the flies; and when he understood that I had come several thousand miles to taste prawn curry, there was a glow of interest in his yellow countenance that was quite gratifying. Arrangements were soon made. In four hours all that gastro-nomic science could accomplish would await my approval. A cheerful drive about the neighbourhood was suggested as a suitable preliminary. The regular handbook sort of thing to do at Galle is a drive to the cinnamon-gardens, where you cut odiferous walking-sticks, fill your pockets with the fragrant bark, and come out quite spicely. There was also a very ancient Buddhist temple, with a huge strongly-gilt heathen deity sitting cross-legged on the altar, like a canonized tailor; and a Buddhist clergyman who chewed betel-nut and kept up a smothering supply of incense, and was very grateful for a two-anna piece and half a cigar. That golden tailor was at least ten feet high as he sat, and he had eyes dispropor-

tionately large and disagreeably expressive, that seemed to roll about without keeping time, and to squint and leer through the murky vapour most abominably.

The cool shelter of the inn was grateful enough after the sweltering heat of the mid-day sun, so I put on a fresh suit of grass-cloth, dipped my head in Cologne-water, and composed my mind for dinner. The huge, stone-walled apartment in which my repast was prepared, had an earthy odour from the tiled floor, and a smell of cocoanut oil that must have been something like the atmosphere of Ali Baba's oil-jars. I was the only dinner guest, and as I sat in the vast solitude, listening to footsteps echoing far and faint—what with the earthy smell and some burning joestick with its incense fumes curling slowly into the shadows of the lofty timber roof, I felt it was like dining in a cathedral.

A sort of grand servitor of the house in a specially fine cotton garment and an extra big tortoiseshell comb arranged the table in a style that only needed some orange blossoms and tin foil to look like a small wedding; and when I took my preliminary sip of sherry I felt it almost incumbent to make a little pleasant speech to myself, and return thanks in a proper soliloquy. The prawns were sublime. I seem to forget the accessories of sauce and vegetable. Dr. Johnson once said of a lady that she had been so well dressed that he could not recollect what she had on, and my prawns were just as well dressed as that lady. Half an hour was spent in a dreamy enjoyment of a dry curry and Amontillado, my white attendant quietly looking on like a benign spectre. Talking would have spoiled the thing. I pointed to a slender-stemmed wine-glass of the substance of a soap bubble, and waved my hand with a gesture of confidence, as Captain Cook might have done to a Polynesian savage. The tortoiseshell comb bent gracefully as divining my desires, and moved away as gently as a tortoiseshell cat. The wine was rich as ever ripened on a volcano. With delicately deferential but quietly decisive manner the spectre removed the debris of the first course. Green cocoa-nut curry was the next item in the programme. The first spoonful threw me into a paroxysm of astonishment and delight. My bosom throbbed, and I think a tear fell into my fourth plate. A little slow music at this juncture would perhaps have tranquillised the system. A melodious gurgling alone broke the silence.

Sparkling St. Peray of 1811, the year of the great comet. Candied pine-apple, jack fruit, maraschino, mango jam, cigars, and coffee, are all that I can clearly recollect afterwards, except that my ghostly guardian extended my legs on the telescope chair, undid my necktie, and sprinkled me with rose-water.

Perhaps it was the monotonous swinging of the punkah as it waved above my head like a dusty banner in a windy cathedral, or the angry droning of the mosquitoes who could make no impression on my seasoned epidermis; but, at any rate, I found myself getting strangely drowsy, and everything growing misty and changing its aspect, just like a shilling's worth of dissolving views, only without the music and bad grammar. And gradually a most portentous tightness came upon me, and I felt an inclination to curl like toasted bacon. I struggled to rise, but felt a sense of general compression as though I were in a suit of plate armour a size too small, with an odd tendency to curvature. I was in a state of collapse, in fact, my nose and toes approximating, and at last was perfectly doubled up, in which condition I tapped my forehead pensively with my big toe, and thought about it. And then the appalling truth opened on me—I was become a prawn!—a scaly monster with a florid complexion and a head fit for nothing. And methought I was seized by two Cingalese policemen in tortoiseshell hats, and carried before a great golden cross-legged magistrate, and I felt myself in the focus of his huge round eyes as though I had been fixed for a stereoscope.

"What's this?" said the gilt-gingerbread-looking fellow on the bench.

"Over-fed himself, please your worship," said a sneaking, cotton-wrapped constable, as he referred to the charge, written with Indian ink on a talipot leaf.

"Fined a three months' indigestion and costs," was the severe sentence.

"Please, your worship," I appealed, looking at his cruciform extremities through my upper eye-lashes, "three months' indigestion will bring no end of distress around my domestic hearth—I mean my American cooking-stove."

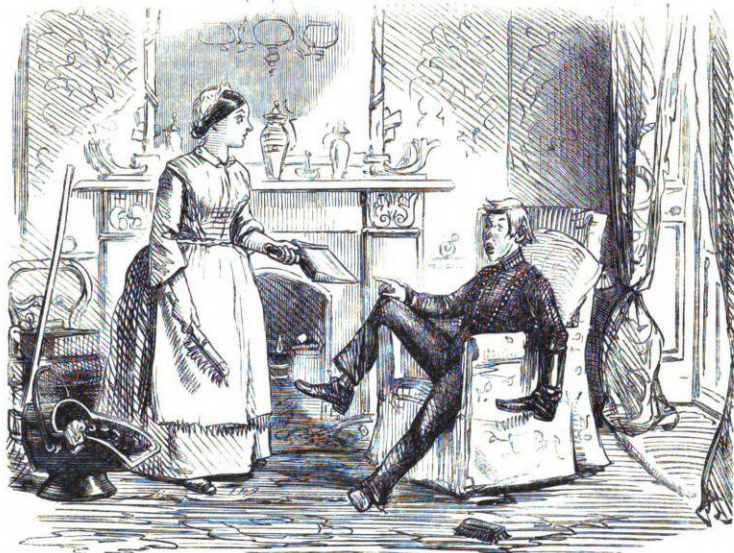
"Mere stomach-ache repentance," said the obdurate brute. "Call the next case."

I gave a howl, and woke. Next morning I sent for Mr. Toodle's pills—one of the "family boxes that contain four." This was five months ago: I am now out of danger.

AUSTRAL.



OUR PAGE.



Sheggs intimates to Mary that he "ain't going to slave as he had bin."

I DECLINE to name the income on which Emma Maria and I married, lest the statement should have a tendency to re-open in these pages or elsewhere a certain discussion which attracted a good deal of attention some little time ago. It is sufficient for my purpose to declare, that its amount was such as to render us desirous of so arranging our prospective household affairs, as to avoid all expense not absolutely necessary for comfort and propriety of appearance. With reference to such arrangements our mutual friends and relatives favoured us with a good deal of advice; and as there was considerable difference in the opinions expressed, rendering it impossible for us, with the best intentions in the world, to follow everyone's counsel, I need scarcely say that we managed to offend, more or less, about nine in every ten of those who were good enough to "take an interest in our welfare."

There was one point, however, on which a remarkable unanimity of opinion appeared to subsist: that point was "servants." It was demonstrated that we couldn't get along at all with only one, and, further, that we couldn't possibly afford to keep two. This would at first sight appear rather a dilemma; not so, however. Two servants "proper" being clearly proved unattainable, the alternative was as clearly proved to be one, and "a page." We were informed that an average

female servant, at average wages, cost from thirty-five to forty pounds a-year; but that a page—buttoned and ornamental to open the door and wait at table, unbuttoned and useful to clean knives and shoes, and so forth—was an article almost costless, and quite priceless, to young housekeepers.

I must affirm, that I did not see the advantages of the proposed functionary in quite so strong a light as some of our advisers, and that it was more in deference to the opinions of others, the parents and guardians of my youth, than of my own free will, that I was induced to try the experiment. And oh! if I had had the smallest idea of what I was preparing for myself and Emma Maria, I would have quarreled with every relative I possessed in the world, rather than have taken the course I did. If the recital of a few of my miserable experiences (a very few, for a volume of this periodical might be filled without exhausting the subject) be the means of preventing any young couple from treading the same dreary path, I shall be amply rewarded. Oh, my young friends, if you would be happy, remain pageless!

Well, having settled upon keeping a page, the next question was how to procure one: and here an aunt of Emma Maria's (from whom she had expectations, never, alas! fulfilled) stepped forward. This old lady took an interest in an orphan asylum, the pupils of which being put out to

service, were bound to their employers for a term of years; and it was represented to me, that, in addition to suiting my own purpose, I should be assisting a deserving charity by taking a boy from the establishment. Accordingly, the week before we were married, Emma Maria and I, accompanied by her aunt, went to inspect the school. Sundry boys were called forward, and put through their facings, as it were, before us. Among these was one of the most ungainly youths I ever remember to have seen. His bones stuck out all over him in great lumps; his head was of the most peculiar shape, all angles where ordinary heads have curves; and there was that in his face which made me whisper to Emma Maria, in my droll way, that I was sure an admirably interesting melo-dramatic story might be written, suggested by his appearance, entitled, "Skeggs; or the Fatal Orphan." As he came from his seat towards us, he took the most absurd and exaggerated pains to tread on the tips of his toes, so as to avoid noise; a mode of progression which ended in his overbalancing, falling heavily against a desk, and eventually rolling up to Emma Maria's little boots, much to her alarm, though she couldn't help laughing when he had picked himself up, at his rueful expression, and the ape-like way in which he rubbed himself.

When we adjourned to the superintendent's room, I was asked if I should like to select a boy. I modestly said that as I knew nothing about any of the youths, I should much prefer leaving it to the superintendent to send me one whom he could thoroughly recommend. He said he would think the matter over, and promised that we should find a boy at our house on our return from our wedding tour, which Emma Maria's aunt, who I am bound to say took a more leading part in the arrangement than I altogether approved of, had told him was at hand.

At that epoch, when we drove up to our door, behind the friends who were in the hall waiting to receive us, my eye discerned a well-remembered hideous face, and I involuntarily exclaimed, in tones of horror, "Skeggs!" I thought Emma Maria would have fainted.

However, there was Skeggs, sure enough, resplendent in bright buttons (I had made arrangements about the clothing question), and on the mantelpiece was a note from the superintendent, stating that Skeggs' name was Bernard Wilkins, and that in his (the superintendent's) opinion, he was the very boy for us.

Emma Maria was rather mollified by this note; she said Bernard was a nice name, and would sound so well. I had misgivings, but I only shook my head; after all, they were but misgivings; I knew nothing about the lad, and could hardly send him back because of his looks. Besides, we were to have him a month on trial before binding him for three years. I may state, too, that the resources of sartorial science had considerably diminished the angularity of his appearance.

During his month of probation, Skeggs so conducted himself as to cause me many pangs of self-reproach for my first judgment of him. He was respectful and attentive, perhaps a shade too demonstratively so: though this may be an after-

thought, begotten of subsequent events. The knives and boots were resplendent, the door was "answered" without undue delay; and the maid-servant's report was in addition so favourable, that, on a certain day, I, the superintendent of the asylum, and Skeggs, set our hands and seals respectively to a document whereby I bound myself to provide Skeggs with food, shelter, and raiment for three years—which was about the worst quarter of an hour's work I ever did.

Very shortly after this the perfidious hypocrite threw off the mask, openly stating to Mary, the maid-servant, "that we had him for three years, and that he wasn't going to slave as he had bin." He became idle, saucy, and gluttonous to a degree I should have before thought incredible; he was always eating, notwithstanding which it came to my knowledge that he had complained to a neighbour's servant that we—that is, Emma Maria and I—were "a rubbishing, starving lot; and that he could hardly get enough to keep body and soul together;" and that he had likewise given to the world sundry other statements, which, though ingeniously and diabolically falsified, were yet sufficiently based upon circumstances of actual occurrence to convince me that he had acquired habits of persevering and judicious eaves-dropping. He speedily became the bane of my life; never did I leave the house in the morning, without some unpleasant reminder of his presence there; never did I return in the evening, but to hear the voice of lamentation and complaint respecting his behaviour. Unblacked were now the boots, unpolished the cutlery, unheeded the knocker and the bell; nay one day he absolutely declined to wait upon Emma Maria at dinner, (I dined at a chop-house near my place of business), and was so violent that, on my return at night, I found her in tears.

I couldn't believe that any sane person would behave as Skeggs had done without some cause, fancied or real, and demanded particulars.

"He just said he wouldn't."

"But, my dear," I asked, "didn't you reason with him on such preposterous conduct?"

Yes, Emma Maria had reasoned with him.

"And what did he do then?"

"He da-danced at me;" with sobbing.

I admitted the difficulty of refuting this argument, and descended to the kitchen. But I could do no good with him, and I found that the notion that "we had him" for so long a time, had taken entire possession of him.

So, on the morrow, I presented myself before the superintendent of the asylum, and laid before him my complaint. I found him a different man from what he had been at our last interview—cold, not to say uncivil.

"It was very strange; Wilkins had always shown himself a remarkably good boy; if I doubted this, I could see his character duly certified in the books of the institution."

I declined this solace, not seeing its exact bearing on my case, and being already aware from experience that Skeggs was a finished hypocrite. Shall I confess that I only kept my temper with difficulty, seeing as I did in the superintendent's manner, an evident expression of opinion that I

had no business to have a boy from the institution behaving badly in my house.

All that I could get by way of proposed remedy was a suggestion that one of the ladies' committee should call at my house, talk to Wilkins, and give him good advice to keep him from future evil. I hadn't the liveliest faith in this moral prophylactic, but, in an evil hour, I consented to its administration. How much the remedy transcended the disease, it is beyond my feeble power to tell.

The committee lady came and talked to our page, and talked and came, and talked again. She was never out of the house; she was there sometimes as early as nine, A.M., and on one occasion she left the door at a quarter before eleven, P.M. Whatever Bernard was doing, she came and demanded him to be talked to. She routed Emma Maria, who hinted to her that her presence was occasionally inconvenient, and when I ventured to second the hint, she wouldn't take it. She possessed us, and I used to go about my daily affairs thinking of how she was even then closeted with Wilkins in our dining-room, and composing imaginary forms of address to her, of which the beginning used to hover between, "Madam, I must really request that you will be good enough," and, "Fiend, in the shape of lady, avaunt!" I don't think I should ever have had the nerve to turn her out, had that course not been forced upon me.

One evening, goaded to frenzy by Skeggs' behaviour, I confess I was so far transported with rage as to give him a box on the ears. This he reported to his lady-friend, and next day I had a visit from her and the superintendent, who took me to task roundly for what he was pleased to call my brutal conduct to an orphan lad, and informed me that if I again laid hands upon him, they would appeal to the law for his protection. Likewise that he could now understand how Wilkins was a boy so different to his former self, supposing my complaints of him to be well grounded. To all this the committee-lady acted as chorus, throwing in remarks and suggestions at intervals in aggravation of my offence. I restrained myself so far as to ask whether they wouldn't take him back again, or even exchange him for another boy; but no, it seemed that as I had made my bed so I must lie. With an exhortation to that treatment of the lad, which would draw out his good qualities (the delivery of which nearly caused me to kick him into the street), the superintendent departed accompanied by the lady. I gave strict orders that on no pretext should either of them be ever again suffered to enter the house.

It may be well supposed how this occurrence acted upon Skeggs. He, of course, learnt the result of the interview between the superintendent and myself—(I'll swear I saw the committee-lady lurking in the street one morning)—and shaped his course accordingly. But deliverance was at hand. One evening I was returning home and some fortunate wind having blown a brick down our bed-room chimney the night before, I bethought me that I would go up the back street, and look whether any outward damage was discernible. It was just dusk, and I hastened up the street, doubting whether the fading light

would serve my purpose, when I suddenly became aware of an old and very ill-favoured woman at our yard-door, in earnest conversation with some one within. Before I could reach the spot, a bundle was transferred to her, and she straightway departed. I went round to the front, was admitted by Emma Maria who was at the window looking out for me, and called Mary, the maid-servant. Mary was out. "At last, Skeggs," thought I, "I have thee," and I regret to say that I felt something very like triumph at the idea.

I summoned him up-stairs, and imperiously demanded what woman he had just been talking to? Of course the first impulse of the ingenuous boy was bold, barefaced falsehood.

"He hadn't been talking to any woman."

I convinced him gently that this line was useless; and then, "Oh, yes; there was a woman!" as though it had quite escaped his memory. "Well, it was—yes, it was his aunt."

"Oh! and what had he given her?"

"Nothing."

It required the threat of a policeman before Skeggs admitted, as he ultimately did, that a few articles of household linen had been considerably bestowed by him upon this relative.

I may as well state here what we afterwards found out; that "a few" very inadequately described the number and variety of articles which had disappeared; evidently during some time.

Next day, I had the pleasure of visiting the school, and informing my friend the superintendent that if he didn't at once ease me of Skeggs, I should be under the necessity of bringing the matter before a magistrate, who would not only deal with the said Skeggs, but would cancel the indenture which had bound him to me. I was sorry, after all, for the superintendent,—he seemed so cast down and really grieved at the affair: but I was firm; and, to prevent the scandal, and consequent detriment to the institution, he consented to quash the indenture. He much wished me to try another boy, but to this proposal I hastily replied, "Heaven forbid!" and left the place, which I have never since entered.

Our next venture was not a bad boy like Skeggs, but he had his faults. He too was glutinous; this, however, I find to be a peculiarity of the genus page; but it was unpleasant that this youth by gross feeding used to bring out boils upon his face to such an extent that he was often unable to wait at table. Not that this was an unmixed subject of vexation, especially when we had friends at our social board; for Edward used occasionally to take an obtrusive interest in the conversation, and alarm people by breaking out into hoarse chuckles, much behind time, at passing jokes; and cover Emma Maria and myself with confusion, either by losing himself in the contemplation of current events, or by dropping the plates and dishes. The fact is, he was only one remove from an idiot. Skeggs' suit of clothes was altered for him, and it appeared that he must have had some undeveloped views on the bullion question as connected with the shiny buttons thereof; for, having removed three of them from the most prominent part of his chest, with a view, I sup-

pose, to some experiments on their nature and properties, he appeared at dinner one Sunday with two common brass flat trouser buttons and one pin, distinctly visible, in lieu of them. Notwithstanding this, there was as much placidity and self-complaisance in his face, as though his appearance presented no grounds for cavil or complaint; and his manner altogether was that of one conscious of being in all respects a perfectly appointed page. This was trying: but it was more so to see him, when mildly questioned as to the cause of this absence of buttons, suddenly pass from absurd equanimity to idiotic despair, giving vent to the most frightful howl imaginable, and protesting that he "thought they were silver," as if that was a good and sufficient excuse. He hadn't sense to perceive that it was an aggravation of the offence. Well, I looked over this, had him re-buttoned, and retained him in my service. What was the consequence? One morning, in accordance with a previous arrangement with my tailor, I told Edward that a person would call for some new clothes,—sent home to me in an unsatisfactory state,—which he was to deliver on such application. When I returned home, I found that the clothes were indeed gone, but whither, no one knew. It appeared that during the forenoon Edward, on opening the door, found there a man, and, idiotically jumping to a conclusion, at once said, "Oh, you're from the tailor, I suppose, for those clothes of master's?" To which the stranger—evidently a man capable of improving opportunity—promptly replied in the affirmative, and at once bore off the habiliments, as also an overcoat voluntarily added by our page. When the tailor's boy—the real Simon Pure—arrived, Edward broke wildly in upon Emma Maria with a voluntary confession, the substance of which I have related. The top-coat he said he thought wanted mending, and it might as well go. This little freak cost me twelve pounds odd, and the services of Edward.

I have left myself no space to describe in detail the misdeeds of subsequent pages, and can only name three briefly: James, who in conjunction with Emma Maria's brother, aged fourteen, and in the course of some experimental philosophy involving the use of gunpowder, set himself on fire; and had it not been for the presence of mind and body of Mary the servant, a female of great dimensions and weight, who at once knocked him down and sat upon him, he would doubtless have set the kitchen on fire also. As it was, he came from beneath Mary bald and buttonless, his clothes being utterly ruined.

Then there was Henry. Well do I remember returning one summer evening at about half-past eight, from a friend's house, and seeing our "pretty page looking out afar,"—that is, perhaps fifty yards from our door,—at a single combat between two of the youth of the neighbourhood. It was Mary's "day out," and Henry had been left in charge of the house. The neglected door had fortunately or unfortunately slammed-to, and I thus found myself shut out from my hearthstone and my household gods. After attracting the delinquent's attention to this state of things, I had to beg temporary accommodation for Emma Maria at a neighbour's, whilst I sought a glazier. I thought myself fortunate in finding one in a neighbouring street, on his way home; and amid the jeers of the multitude, I had to superintend this individual whilst he cut out a pane of glass from the parlor window. Having thus gained access to the house, he opened the front door; but I regret to say that on the way he managed to possess himself of Emma Maria's gold watch, which was always hung from a stand on the mantelpiece, and that I have not had the pleasure of seeing him since.

After this youth's ignominious dismissal, came a string of pages, principally characterised by general incapacity; among them, however, stand prominently forward in my remembrance, John, who was subject to fits, poor fellow,—not his fault certainly, but to some extent our misfortune.

It will be seen, when I mention our "page," that I use the word as a noun of multitude, signifying many.

Talk of thirty-five pounds a year as the cost of a servant! I am convinced that I am within the mark, when I declare that the average annual expense of our page, or series of pages, was not one farthing under fifty pounds, taking into consideration the almost constant renewal of clothing requisite, and the damage and loss consequent upon stupidity and evil doing.

When I at length became convinced that the saving to be effected by the employment of these boys was a myth, I registered a vow,—that is, I told Emma Maria—that I would no more of them, to her great delight.

We got another respectable female servant—not easy to get, my friends tell me; but we were fortunate, as we were perhaps unfortunate in our selection of boys;—at all events, never have I had occasion to repent of the resolution which I formed of abolishing and doing away with the office of "our page."

C. P. WILLIAM.



HOW I BECAME A HERO. By G. P.

PART I. THE JOURNEY.



EVERY one was gone or going to the sea-side, or to the north of Devon, or to the Malvern Hills; that is, every one not already gone, or determined to go, to the Rhine or to Germany, or to the last seat of war. There were people having money in their pockets who were determined to sniff the Thames no longer than they were absolutely obliged; others again who, having suffered, were taking flight, seeking safety in change of air, and in change of scene, forgetfulness.

Others again—were they many or few? I cannot tell—just went “for a little change.” I am of that last number. I present myself as a hero with but little of a taste for wandering—contented with my own country; not worn-out by debates and committees; not even sick of the Thames. Simply a lover of change, and of change requiring only a little, and that little only once a year. Do you say, “What a hero!” and look scornful? Have you settled that I am not a hero at all? Let me remind you that some men have heroism thrust upon them, without any apparent predestination in their physiognomies.

Let me tell you, for your encouragement, how,

not being, as you rightly observe, the least bit of a hero when I started, I became one during my “little change,” and hope to remain a hero for the rest of life.

I went from a great city to the sea-side. I went with a portmanteau, a carpet-bag, a hat-box, and an umbrella, all of them in white-canvas cases. I went a long day's journey by rail. I stopped at the Beachly Station, and there was directed into an omnibus which, after an hour's tiresome jolting, brought me to the Beachly Hotel. Myself, my portmanteau, carpet-bag, hat-case, and umbrella, with the addition of three newspapers, a shilling railway-book, and a Bradshaw, collected on the journey, were then deposited in a fly, and at half-past six o'clock on a summer evening I was suddenly brought up at No. 7, Bellevue Terrace, where I was expected.

But my journey had not been without incidents. The carriage in which I had set out was at that time vacant of all persons and things except myself and my belongings. Where it first stopped a change occurred. A man who looked of no particular age, but probably numbering years between

twenty-five and fifty, got into the carriage with the air of one who did not see me. He put his bag within an inch of my legs, and when I moved took no notice of the fact; he arranged himself and several small parcels with so perfect an appearance of being alone, that I had suddenly a disagreeable sense of being invisible, and I found myself choking a cough lest I should disturb my companion. He spoke to the porters, and inquired the hour of arrival at Newport. It was comforting to learn from this that I should not have my unconscious companion all the way to Beachly. I had not recovered from the peculiar sensations excited by this person when another station was reached.

As we slackened our pace I saw a lady on the platform, whose sudden animation as our carriage passed her was evidently a recognition of my companion. But his countenance exhibited no emotion, not until this lady spoke, and said: "O, Leslie!" did he appear to be aware of his being known.

"Terese!" he answered, with a slightly foreign accent, and opening the door was in an instant at her side. She was accompanied by an elderly woman whom I took for her servant. This person proceeded to place a shawl on the seat opposite to my companion, and in another moment Terese got in. The step was of an impossible height.

"Will you take my hand?" I said. She thanked me, and got in with my help.

Her "thank you" was gentle; her smile—though it was more given to the seat of the carriage than to me—was extraordinarily sweet; and her "Now, Leslie," made me feel that the so-called was an insolent fellow, though my reason for so sudden a verdict would not be very easy to give. In an instant we were off, and in another instant I had begun to feel myself again invisible; and with such force did the sensation cling to me, that I felt the discomfort increasingly. I was annoyed, unhappy, and I became nervous. I wondered if I should get to the end of the journey alive; was I losing my personal identity? Another and another station. We stopped ten minutes for refreshment. The elderly woman came to the door. A cup of coffee in her hand.

"Have some coffee, Leslie?"

"Yes, Terese."

"Nugent! another."

The woman brought another. I jumped out of the carriage, drank a glass of sherry in some soda-water. To get in I had to come to their side of the carriage. The man held his empty coffee-cup towards me as if I had been one of the waiters. An impulse—of generous kindness I hope—made me take it. Terese blushed, not rosy but deep-red—red, like a damask rose. A strong emotion of anger took hold of me. It all passed in a moment. But astonishment at his insolence—at his calm indifference, though he was gazing with a smile on her agitated form; and my perception and inexpressible admiration of her great beauty, as she raised towards me the face that a very thick veil had shaded till now, all in that moment mingled with my anger—my anger which so suddenly vanished—fled for ever—leaving only admiration behind, as she said: "Forgive us, sir; my husband is blind!"

"What have I done?" asked Leslie, emotionless no longer.

I jumped into the carriage, and we were off again. A cry from the platform—a woman helplessly running, with her arms stretched out towards us.

"Nugent is left behind!" cried the lady. As the woman said afterwards, somehow she did not think the train would start till she had taken master's coffee cup. The blind man was distressed.

"You will have so much trouble at Newport, Terese; such quantities of luggage. I know where it all is: but I am so vexed."

The woman made light of it. "O I shall get on capitally. Don't mind. You must stay in the waiting-room. I will manage it all."

"I was so glad to see you," he said; "and now I wish you had not come."

She turned to me pleasantly: "I was to have met Mr. Barrington at Newport, where we are to leave the railway: we are staying with friends in that neighbourhood. But I thought the journey would be so long for him alone, that I could not resist my wish to meet him; so Nugent and I started early, and we met as you saw."

"I have to stay half an hour at Newport," I answered; "I hope you will let me be of service to you."

She had told me their name. I had my carpet-bag, with my full direction in easily read letters on the white canvas cover, on the seat before me. She read it as I ceased speaking.

"Reginald Deane!" My father had a friend of that name, a man of large property; he was fond of literature and antiquities. He lived a great part of his life in Germany. There my father lived. I was born in Germany; Leslie, too, was born there—at Heidelberg."

There was such music in her voice, such sweetness in her upturned face, I was sorry that the husband of this beautiful young woman could not see what I saw. I wondered if he could guess at her great loveliness—if he had any correct idea of a mingled gentleness and majesty that seemed to me to distinguish her from all other beauties of her age and sex that I had ever had the luck to look upon. She ceased speaking, and I said:

"That Reginald Deane was my uncle. His property was divided by seven when he died, and one such portion came to me."

The blind man spoke: "My wife's father's name was Leslie; I was called after him: we are cousins. We had been engaged to be married almost from childhood. Was she not good to keep her word? Two years before our marriage I went to the West Indies, and by my own folly had a sun-stroke there. I always think that my blindness grew out of that. I was very ill for a year and a half, suffering from painful variations of sight. Then I woke one morning, and knew I was awake, yet all was dark! She married me, nevertheless."

Scream went the whistle—"Newport, Newport. Change for Beachly." Here we were then. The blind Mr. Barrington collected all his parcels, jumped out, helped his wife, and said, "Where is Mr. Deane?"

"Now, what can I do?"

"Well, you ask if Sir Frederick Worth's carriage is here. They send for the luggage, too. This is very kind of you."

Sir Frederick's carriage, and Sir Frederick's drag for the luggage—servants who knew their work, and magnificent horses who knew their masters—a first-rate turn-out it was. I did Nugent's work like a man, not any better, I am afraid; for Mrs. Barrington, on her husband's arm, gave many sweet-voiced directions: "O not under that trunk, please." "Will you tell the men to put those light boxes on the top?" And, "Make the men put all those light things in the carriage and not in the drag:" and so on.

"This card has our direction when in London on it," said Mr. Barrington; "I hope we shall see you again." Like all blind people, he talked of seeing.

The carriage drove up. Mrs. Barrington got in: "Now, Leslie!"—once more those sweet-voiced words.

"But where are you going, now?" addressing me.

"I am going to Beachly."

"Do you live there?"

"No. I go—I go—for a little change," I answered, smiling at the idle reason. She smiled, too. What a radiance was that smile!

"We shall be there ourselves in a fortnight, I hope. We have taken a house—*Beaumont*. I never was there: but you will find us out."

"Pray do—don't forget!" said Mr. Barrington.

I stood with my hat up—they drove away—I walked back to the platform. How hot, hard, and white everything looked! I took refuge in a room: it would not do. Beer and porter; cakes and sweetmeats—they always made me ill. Once more among the porters, a sort of wooden sofa, all bars and blisters, was a luxury. I sat in the shade: I did not know how the time passed. The blind man and his beautiful wife filled my thoughts. A train came up—a woman, half out of the window, caught sight of me. Her face lighted up; she cried, "O, sir!"

I jumped forward: "All right: you get out here."

"And the luggage, sir?"

You see, I had suddenly become a friend of the family. I pulled Mrs. Nugent out, told her to get a fly, and was promptly obeyed. The half-hour was over; and seeing an empty carriage in the train to Beachly, I got in, made myself up in a corner, with an obstinate determination to think no more, and slumber, if possible, and I slept accordingly; and arrived at my lodgings safely, as I have said.

"You have been expecting me?" was my first speech to my landlady, as she preceded me up-stairs.

"Yes, sir. Your sister, sir—she said she was your sister—a lady of the name of Porter, took these apartments last week, and said you would be here to-day. This is your drawing-room, sir. Small room inside again, you perceive: very useful a second room, however small. Bed-room and dressing-room up-stairs. Do you travel alone, sir?"

"I am alone," was the reply, that came in rather a peremptory manner, I suppose, for the good woman stepped back, and begged my pardon. I knew she thought of a wife and several smaller angels, but I could not help it.

I heard the luggage going up-stairs. I said I would have tea immediately, and I threw myself into an easy chair, thinking over the day. The room was such as all goes-to-the-sea-side know well. Pictures on the wall, inclining to gloom and somnolence. "Scenery pictures," as my hostess said, adding, "my brother-in-law's"—Of course you know them now. I gazed on them helplessly. When tea came my dreamy fit was over. So, leaving the tea to cool itself, I got down to the beach, which was spread for a tempting two miles below me. I walked from end to end, and back again, swinging along as if I was doing a match on a turnpike road. When I turned towards the house, three caps disappeared from as many windows. I knew that they had called me "the odd gentleman." I resumed the interrupted tea, and contemplated my outer man in the looking-glass. Look over my shoulder, fair reader. You see me—a man of forty, not gray yet, neither wrinkled nor fat: in excellent health. Something about the shoulders speaks of the noble science. "A Westminster boy still," was my own verdict. Very young ladies might have called me middle-aged: sensible mammas would be sure to pronounce me an excellent match; so steady—such a good friend for Fred, and to themselves quite a blessing.

These observations are not out of place, for I—hitherto supposed to be a confirmed bachelor—stood at that glass, and took into consideration—*Matrimony*. Why in the world had I never married? Had I asked my sister, who lived comfortably in the country about sixteen miles off, she would have answered fluently: "I am sure I don't know, Reginald, but it is perfectly certain that you will never marry now." I heard her answer as if she had been there. I heard a soft echo of another voice, "Now, Leslie!" "Now, now," I repeated the words, and applied them differently. But where was the lady, and who? I did not know a living woman to whom I could have offered myself. Once, twenty years ago, I had supposed myself heart-broken; and perhaps something *did* happen, as I had never been in love since. But I knew that I never saw Lady Martingale without blessing Fate and my stars, and that I felt a friendship for my lord, which made me grateful for his mere existence. Why, then, had I never married! "A wrong form of the question," I murmured to myself, sitting down to my tea with a relish. "Why don't I marry? I wonder if she has a sister!"

"Where is Beaumont?" said I, when the next morning my exquisite dish of fish was brought in by the landlady.

"Beaumont," she repeated, as if the name was unfamiliar. "Beaumont, now—I seem to know the name—dear me, sir, Beaumont!"

"Find out," I said. "It is a house taken by Mr. Leslie Barrington."

"O, now I know—I Leg your pardon, sir. You see this is it. There was an old, strange,

tumble-down kind of a court, in one of the best situations of the town. It was inhabited by workmen; they had carpenters' shops and such like there. A builder took a lease of these premises two years ago, with an understanding that he was to build a certain number of cottagers' houses on some waste land, and build in this court some houses fit for gentlemen's residences or good lodging-houses. The first house is finished, and called Beaumont. He is very lucky to let it so well. The works around are stopped; but there is such a confusion of rubbish and materials at the back, where the other three sides of the court stood, that none but a blind gentleman would have taken Beaumont. The sitting-room windows look on it. But Sir Frederick Worth took it. And as the sea-air comes straight upon the houses, and the rooms are handsome, and there is a carriage-drive to the other side of the house, and no thoroughfare, which he seemed to think a great deal of, he took the house for three months, when the family will have to go out, and the works will begin again. If, sir, you go through our garden above the house, and get over the stile, you will see Beaumont across the down on your right. You can then walk straight to it. You are sure to find some one about. It is not three minutes' walk from our garden fence."

Before two hours had passed, I had gone all over Beaumont. It was just as the woman had said. Beams, rafters, old flooring, and roof-timber piled up, or still standing, looked perilous to my uninstructed eyes in the great yard behind. The windows that looked over this bewilderment of fallen houses, had beyond them as glorious a sea-view as the eye could rest on: and the salt breeze came scented across the heath and wild thyme of the down between. A decent woman showed me the house. It did nicely for the blind gentleman, she thought. It was the healthiest place, and would be the prettiest in all Beachly. And so my first day was wandered away till about four o'clock. I had not been in my lodgings more than half-an-hour, when I heard such a music of voices—a chirruping like the first efforts of young birds at song—and low sweet laughs that made me smile. The door opened, and a child, all sash and flounce, and hat and feathers, stood rosy and speaking:

"I am Ellen Worth! If you please, Georgy, and nurse, and I, are come to say that Mrs. Barrington and mamma are at Beaumont, and they are coming here, and are you at-home, Mr. Deane?"

Upon which the little spokeswoman stepped aside, rather out of breath, and Georgy, looking very shy, and nurse curtsying, appeared, in the back-ground. But few words were said, before Ellen, who had taken her place at the open window, cried out: "Here they are," and once more I was in the beautiful presence of the blind man's wife.

Lady Worth was an elegant woman, about ten years older than Mrs. Barrington, who was not more, I thought, than five-and-twenty. I had been opening a box sent by my sister for my examination. There were things in this box which had got into her possession accidentally, and which belonged to me. I had sent her, on our dear

father's death, about a year before, a trunk which at first had appeared to contain only clothes, old lace, old music, and needle-work belonging to my mother. On her taking these things out she had found a box, tied up and labelled, thus—"Given to me by my dear friend, Gerard Leslie—signed, Reginald Deane." My father had written under this—"My brother, before his death, gave me this box, and told me what the contents were. I asked what I should do with it. He answered: 'Give it to my nephew, your son, when he is forty, if you like.' I intend to adhere to this suggestion—signed, NICOLAS DEANE."

I had received this box from my sister that morning, and just before little Ellen Worth entered the room I had opened it. The very top thing was a miniature. Folded in soft leather and satin, it had been lying there since the death of my father's eldest brother, a rich bachelor, of whose inheritance my share had been about a thousand a year; nearly double that from my father had made me in the eyes of many a rich man. I had begun to think of this since breakfast, really, as I had never thought of it before. Why did I not marry? was still the question at my heart. I held the red case in its wrappings with a little thrilling sense of what it was—a miniature—of whom? Man or woman? If such a moment, reader, has ever come to you, you, too, will have felt the same. I had opened the case, glanced at the exquisitely painted figure, and put it down—threw it aside suddenly—and was all in a gasp of surprise, when the chirping voices ushered in the little lady at the door. I shut the case, and threw a newspaper over it.

"Here they are!" said the child, and in another moment I was welcoming my guests, and asking after Mr. Barrington.

The children were wild about the beach and the sea. Their mother standing by them left Mrs. Barrington for a moment by my side. I opened the miniature and gave it to her.

"Do you know who that is?"

"Do you?" she asked with a smile, wondering and beautiful.

"No."

As she gazed smiling, and pushing her rich hair aside—for she had taken off her hat—the picture seemed to gaze on her; and whether Mrs. Barrington grew more like the picture, or the ivory like a mirror reflected her, it appeared to my puzzled senses difficult to decide. It was a marvellous picture of her, just as she stood at that moment in her glorious beauty: so like—so superhumanly like, it seemed to me, that watching for her answer, I had begun to consider whether I had any right to keep so perfect a likeness of another man's wife.

"It is my mother," she said. "She was a Miss Barrington—Lealie's aunt—an heiress. My father, Colonel Leslie, outlived her several years. They are both dead now. Mr. Deane, I know how you got this."

She looked towards Lady Worth and spoke to her.

"Margaret, the children would see the bay best from that inner-room!"

Her friend understood her, and we were left alone.

"It is strange that we should have met by chance," she said, speaking rapidly. "I can tell you what you might never have known had we not met. Your uncle loved my mother, Mr. Deane. They never met after she was married. But at her funeral—she is buried abroad—a stranger stood by the grave weeping. That stranger was Mr. Deane. He had not expected to see my father there. But he was there; and, taking the stranger by the arm, my father spoke to him. From that hour they became dear friends: the man who had loved, and been loved—oh, so fondly!—and he who had loved and never been loved again. This picture is a copy of one I have. My father had it taken some time during the first year of his married life. It was copied for your uncle with my father's leave. Your uncle was with my father on his death-bed. It is a strange tale, Mr. Deane! But it is time to go now. We shall be here next Thursday."

We shook hands, and civil speeches were made to me by Lady Worth.

As Lady Worth turned round to see after her children, I offered my hand again to Mrs. Barrington, and said, as she took it with a frank smile:

"Mrs. Barrington, have you a sister?"

One keen, quick look from those eyes, usually so soft and gay, followed by a glance of intense amusement, vexed me—vexed me through and through like a sharp irritating pain. Instantly her face changed—she had read my countenance. She never took her eyes from mine, but looked at me sweetly, fearlessly; and, with a wondering, almost questioning kindness in her voice, said:

"No!"

When they had been gone five minutes, that past was like a dream.

(To be continued.)

